G. R. Barrell

THROUGH THE CHURCH GATE

Book III

THE PRAYER BOOK AND HUMAN LIFE

DARTON, LONGMAN & TODD

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G.R.B.

Introduction

THIS is one of a series of four books about the Church of England. Its aim is to give the reader an outline of the faith, life, worship and organisation of the Church—to lead him, as it were, inside the gate. Although the four books are intended to be read in order, each is complete in itself, and covers one aspect of the Established Church.

The first book deals with the things which are most easily seen and which, therefore, are the first things about which questions may be asked. In a very brief outline, it covers the history of the Church, its organisation and outward forms. In the second book the reader is taken, step by step, through the Christian year and its orderly round of worship. The third book is concerned with the Prayer Book as a guide to human life, helping the traveller to find his way at each crossroads he reaches on his journey from the cradle to the grave. Finally, in the fourth book, we come to consider some important aspects of the work of the Church in the present time, and also the privileges and responsibilities of church membership.

One word of explanation is needed. At a number of points in this series comparisons have been made between the practice of the Church of England and the other religious bodies which are to be found in this country. This has been done because there is often ignorance both of the similarities and of the differences which exist. The fact that the amount of space devoted to the other churches is very small in comparison with the books as a whole is not

due to any desire to minimise the work which they have done, and continue to do. These books, however, are primarily intended for church folk who wish to know more about their own Church and its working, and for this reason it has been necessary to keep the Church of England firmly in the centre of the picture.

I

To the Reader

SUPPOSE you were going on a cycling holiday. There would be two main ways in which you could tackle your preparations. You could, for example, set out from home one morning with no real idea of where you were going. At nightfall you would find somewhere to sleep, and the next morning you would start off again. There is no doubt that you would derive a great deal of benefit from a holiday of this kind—you would be in the sun and the fresh air, and you would see plenty of new places. On the other hand, you would certainly miss a great deal just because you didn't know it was there.

The other way is to plan much of the journey in advance. Weeks before you start out you could get some maps, and decide on your route and the places where you want to stay. Then you could look at the guide books, and make a note of the things worth seeing. This way you would get even more out of your journey, because, before you began, you would know something about the kind of places you intend to visit. You would be less likely to waste time because you had lost your way, and you would see many more interesting things simply because you knew where to look for them.

Life is an adventurous journey. During the early stages we do not have to do quite so much about finding our

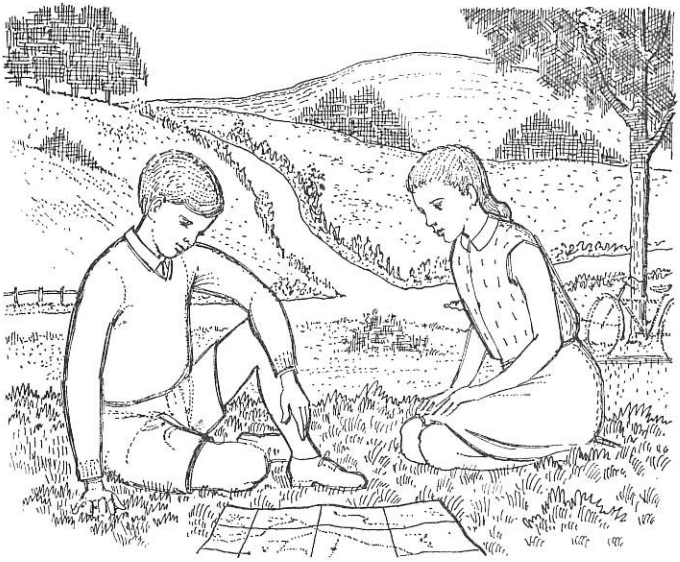

Fig. 1 Finding the way.

way, because our parents guide us along it. This part of the adventure is more like travelling by train, when we rely on the railway staff to make sure we are on the right track.

At last the time comes when we must find our own way through life. We shall come across difficulties—even dangers—and there will be crossroads where we may find it hard to know which way to take. There will be exciting moments when we suddenly turn a bend in the road and a wonderful view is spread in front of us, but the bulk of the time will be spent pedalling along quietly and uneventfully. And, as on all journeys, the time will come when we

A cross-country route high ground at first & later crossing the Thames at Newbridge. Maximum gradient 1 in 8 ascent from Little Rissington

Miles	
	BOURTON-ON-THE-WATER
	Follow **unclass** rd to
2	Little Rissington
	Asc (1 in 8) then keep lt
	½m on over X-rds
	¼m farther t rt **A424**
8	Burford*
	Asc (1 in 9) to
¼	AA Box 158 (Burford)
	T lt **A40**
4½	(edge of) Minster Lovell*
	In 2m t rt
	(SP **Abingdon A415**)
2½	(edge of) Witney*
	At rbt take **3rd exit unclass**
	In ¾m fwd **A415**
1½	Ducklington*
3½	*Golden Balls PH*
	T lt
¾	Standlake*
1¼	Newbridge* (R Thames)
2	Kingston Bagpuize*
	T lt then rt
	In 2¼m t rt then lt
3½	Marcham
	By Marcham Rd enter
2¾	ABINGDON

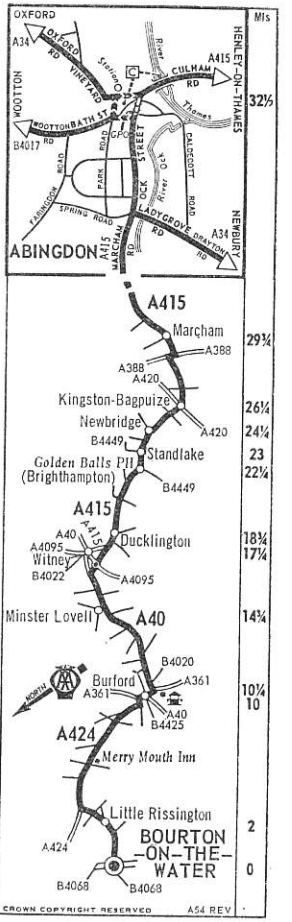

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Fig. 2 A planned route as provided by the Automobile Association to help its members on their journeys.

reach the end of the road. Then we shall put our maps away, and prepare to rest.

If you look at the index of the Prayer Book, the services seem to be jumbled up and not to be in any particular order. This is not really so, but in the chapters which follow we shall select those services which are most commonly in use for ordinary people, and rearrange them so that we can see them marking the crossroads, the exciting views, and the ordinary parts of the journey of life.

In this way we can see that the Prayer Book serves as a guide-book for our journey, providing a service for the important occasions as well as for the more humdrum parts of the way. Baptism, for example, is the beginning of our travels, and Confirmation the point at which we begin to decide on our route for ourselves. Marriage can be looked at as the moment when we exchange our solo machines for a tandem, and the burial service is used when we reach our destination and enter our Father's house. Side by side with these special occasions are the Holy Communion, Matins and Evensong, which we can look upon as our regular resting-places when we are tired and need to refresh ourselves.

Most of us are impatient to begin an adventure, so let us spend no more time before we look at what our guide-book has to tell us about the first stage.

1. A Baptism

2. Matins at the Parish Church in the village of Compton Abbas, Dorset

2

The Ark of Christ's Church

The Ministration of Baptism

THE news spread through Palestine like wildfire. 'Have you heard? There's a new prophet in the Jordan valley! He's calling the people to be baptised.'

Not very far from Jericho the first prophet for three centuries was telling the Jews about God. The son of a priest, the prophet's name was John, and he soon gained the nickname of 'the Baptist'.

One day, whilst he was talking to the crowds, he looked up and saw his cousin Jesus listening to him. When John had finished speaking Jesus came forward with the others to be baptised. At first the Baptist hesitated. 'No,' he said, 'you are greater than I, and it would be more fitting if *you* were to baptise *me*.'

Jesus would not hear of it, however, and insisted that he should be baptised.

Baptism is a very ancient ceremony and, in one form or another, was practised long before the time of John the Baptist. The use of water is due to the fact that, to some extent, it was regarded as a form of purification. Just as water can be used to remove stains from material, in baptism it was looked upon as the symbol by which the stains of past sins were washed away. The important thing

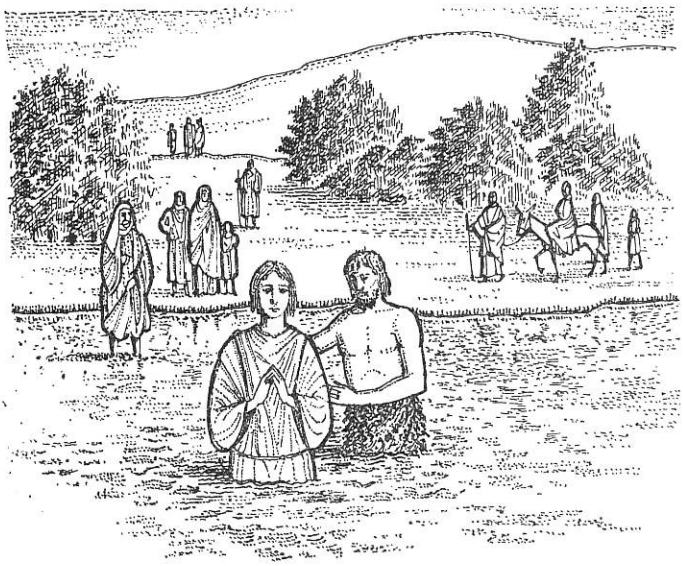


Fig. 3 John the Baptist.

to remember about baptism, however, is that it is the beginning of a new life—the Christian life. Here, again, there is a symbolic reason for the use of water. If you stay under water for too long, you will drown. In John the Baptist's day baptism was by total immersion, and the candidate was dipped completely beneath the surface of the water. This was a sign that he had 'died' so far as his old life was concerned; he rose from the water to begin his new life. Total immersion was practised for many centuries; indeed, it is still used by some Christians, notably the Baptists, today. The Prayer Book still orders that 'if the godparents certify him that the child may well endure it' the priest shall 'dip it in the water discreetly and warily'.

John's baptism was a baptism of repentance, and he warned his followers to be ready to give up their past sins before he baptised them. Only then would they be ready to be born into a new life.

In the early Church baptism often took place just before Easter, as the climax of the period of prayer and fasting during Lent. Frequently whole families were baptised together, and out of this grew the practice of bringing the children of Christian homes to be baptised as soon as possible, in order that they might be received into the Christian family. In northern countries the weather was usually too cold at Easter, and the annual baptism was held at Whitsuntide. Because the candidates wore white clothes as a symbol of purity, the feast of Pentecost became popularly known as 'White Sunday' or 'Whit Sunday'.

Our Prayer Book contains three services of baptism. At the time when the book was prepared, in 1662, most of the candidates were small children, and the service for the public baptism of infants stands first. Medical skill was not nearly so advanced in the seventeenth century as it is today, however, and many children died soon after they were born. Consequently it was not possible to take them to church to be baptised. In such cases a special service of private baptism could be used in the child's home. If the baby lived, he was received publicly into the Church at a later date. Although most English children were baptised as infants, however, the same was not true of the colonies in America. During the seventeenth century many folk left this country to settle in the New World. Once there they tried, often with considerable success, to convert the people amongst whom they were living to Christianity. The converts were often baptised in large

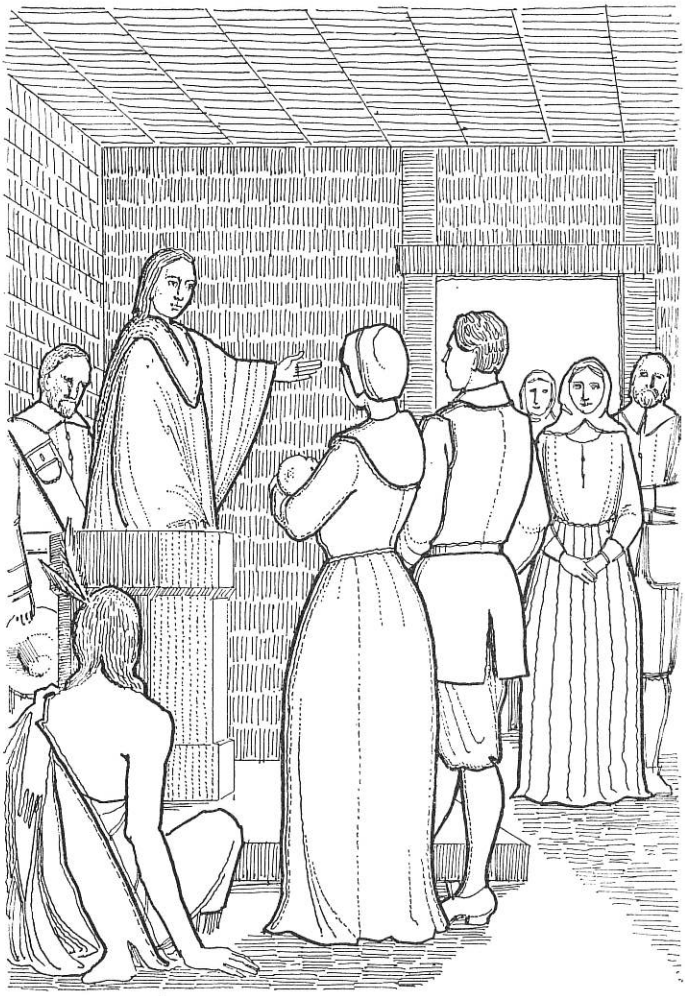


Fig. 4 A seventeenth century Baptism in the American Colonies.

numbers, and a situation rather like that in the early days of the Church began to develop. Many of the converts were old enough to make the baptismal promises themselves, and brought along their children to be baptised at the same time. The service for the baptism of 'such as are of riper years' was originally provided for use in these circumstances. It was not intended, however, that it should be used only in the colonies, and baptism is administered in this form to an adult candidate in this country.

Throughout our lives we belong to a number of different 'families'. We are born into our own family, from which we take our surname, but we are also part of the family of the Church, and to enter this we must be 'born again of water and of the Spirit', as our Lord told the Jewish lawyer Nicodemus one night.[1] When this happens we begin a new life and to mark this fact we take a new name—our Christian name.

The time for baptism prescribed in the Prayer Book is after the second lesson at Morning or Evening Prayer 'when the most number of people come together'. Normally it is administered by a priest or a deacon, but in a grave emergency it can be performed at any time, in any place, and by any person. If, for example, a baby is dying and no priest can be found in time, a layman or laywoman may baptise, provided that water is used in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Baptism should not, however, be a hole-and-corner affair with just one or two people present; it is a matter for the *whole* Church, and should take place in the presence of the local congregation.

When a baby is born there is great excitement in the

[1] St John 3.1–21.

family, and all the relatives come to see the new arrival. We look upon this as perfectly natural and right. Is it not therefore just as right to expect the family of the Church to gather when a new child is born into its midst? As we watch the solemn ceremony which makes a new member of the Church we may remember that the same promises were made on our behalf many years ago.

One odd thing about the service at first sight is that the baby, who is probably only a few weeks old, is asked a number of questions, and the answers which he should give are provided in the Prayer Book! How strange it seems, for example, to ask a child who cannot speak whether he wishes to be baptised. We should hardly believe our ears if the baby did, in fact, answer, 'That is my desire.'

This, of course, is where the godparents, or sponsors, come in, for it is their duty to answer for the baby. A boy normally has two godfathers and one godmother; a girl one godfather and two godmothers—but there may be more. Godparents must be chosen very carefully, because they must answer honestly the questions put to the child at his baptism, and they also undertake to see that their godchild is brought up as a Christian. Strictly speaking, fathers are forbidden to be sponsors of their own children, but occasionally a child's own parents act as two of his godparents. This seems rather foolish, because, although the godparents' duties are binding on them whilst the child's parents are alive, godparents have an even heavier responsibility should the natural parents die. If a child is born into a Christian home, the godparents' responsibilities will be lighter, because the father and mother will see that their child is brought up 'in the nurture and admonition of the Lord'. Even so, good godparents are a great

asset to a child, because they are absolutely his own, and are not shared with anyone else—even his brothers and sisters.

Godparents should have been baptised themselves, and it is really desirable that they should be confirmed and practising members of the Church. It is quite wrong to choose godparents only because they are likely to give their godchild expensive birthday and Christmas presents, but unfortunately this sometimes happens.

The font[1] stands inside the church, usually quite near the door. The person who is being baptised is beginning his life in the Church and has, so to speak, just come through the door. At one time it was customary to baptise in running water, and this is still often the case in the mission field but, for many centuries in this country the indoor font has generally taken the place of the river. Before the service begins the font is filled with pure water, and the parents and godparents take their places near it with the person to be baptised.

Baptism cannot be administered more than once to the same person, and the service starts with a question: 'Hath this child been already baptised, or no?' If the answer is 'No', the service continues, but it cannot proceed if the answer is 'Yes' unless there is some uncertainty as to whether the original baptism had been performed correctly. In such a case the service continues conditionally, the priest saying: '*If thou art not already baptised*, I baptise thee . . .'

After the opening question, the whole congregation is asked to pray for the child, that he may be washed by the water in the font and be sanctified[2] by the Holy Spirit.

[1] The word means 'fountain'.
[2] Made holy.

Then the priest reads the Gospel—the story of our Lord blessing children who had been brought to him—and explains that just as Jesus blessed those children two thousand years ago so he will love and bless the child who is about to be brought to him in the sacrament of baptism.

The *vows*, or promises, follow. As we have already seen, the 1662 Prayer Book asks these questions of the child directly, but in the 1928 Prayer Book the promises are made in the name of the child. The two forms are printed side by side on the opposite page.

These are solemn promises made before God, and on behalf of the child. The godparents promise that they will do their best to see that the child is brought up to follow the teaching of our Lord, and to become a loyal member of the Church. This means that they must ensure that their godchild is taught to understand the Christian faith, and encouraged to live a Christian life. It is no easy task that the sponsors pledge themselves to undertake, and it will be many years before it comes to an end. The child has come to the first crossroads on his journey through life. He can choose between two guides—between our Lord and the devil—and between two roads—the good and the evil. The baptismal vows are promises to take our Lord as the guide, and to follow the good way.

Turning to the font, the priest blesses the water. At one time the water in the font was changed only once a year, and it was blessed at a separate service. This custom was dropped in the 1552 Prayer Book.

So we come to the *baptism* itself. This is the essential part of the service, and must be correctly administered. In emergency it is possible to leave out as much of the rest as may be necessary, but the act of baptism, which takes only a few seconds, cannot be altered. We must

Fig. 5 The Baptismal Vows, 1662 and 1928.

1662	*1928*
Dost thou, in the name of this child, renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the carnal desires of the flesh, so that thou wilt not follow, nor be led by them?	Dost thou, in the name of this child, renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the sinful desires of the flesh, so that thou wilt not follow, nor be led by them?
Answer: I renounce them all.	*Answer:* I do.
Dost thou believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth?	Dost thou in the name of this child profess the Christian faith?
	Answer: I do.
	Priest and Godparents: I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth:
And in Jesus Christ his only-begotten Son our Lord? And that he was conceived by the Holy Ghost; born of the Virgin Mary; that he suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified dead, and buried; that he went down into hell, and also did rise again the third day; that he ascended	And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, Suffered under Pontious Pilate, Was crucified, dead, and buried, he descended into hell; The third day he rose again from the dead, He ascended into heaven, And sitteth on

into heaven and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; and from thence shall come again at the end of the world, to judge the quick and the dead?

And dost thou believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy Catholic Church; the Communion of Saints; the Remission of sins; the Resurrection of the flesh; and everlasting life after death?

Answer: All this I steadfastly believe.

Wilt thou be baptised in this faith?

Answer: That is my desire.

Wilt thou then obediently keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of thy life?

Answer: I will.

---

the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy Catholic Church; the Communion of Saints; the Forgiveness of sins; the Resurrection of the body; And the Life everlasting.

Amen.

Dost thou in the name of this child promise obedience to God's holy will and commandments?

Answer: I do.

Dost thou in the name of this child ask for baptism?

Answer: I do.

remember that baptism is one of the two sacraments which our Lord himself commanded. The Catechism calls a sacrament 'an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace'. In any sacrament the priest performs the outward and visible sign, but the most sacred part of the sacrament—the gift of an inward and spiritual grace comes to us directly from our Lord himself. In the words of Article XXV:

> 'Sacraments ordained of Christ be not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession, but rather they be certain sure witnesses, and effectual signs of grace and God's good will towards us, by the which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our Faith in him.'

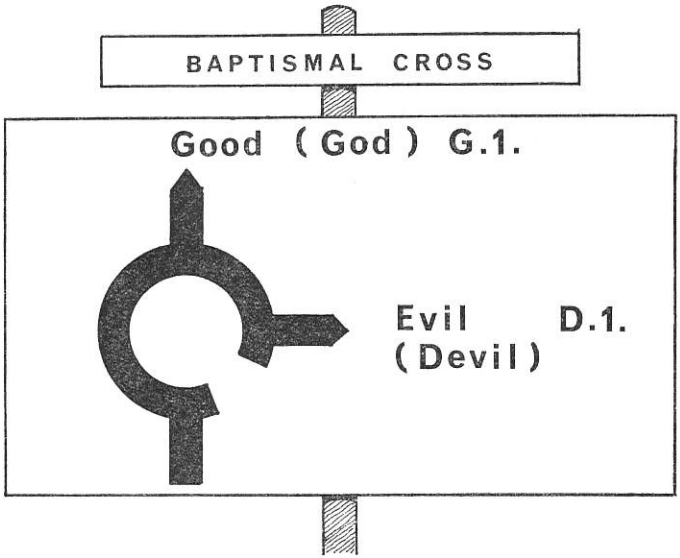


Fig. 6 Which way?

In Baptism two things are essential: the use of water, and baptism into 'the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost'. Used with the child's Christian name, these words mean that he has been brought into the family of our Lord. You will see the exact form which is used on the opposite page.

The priest takes the baby in his arms or, if he is baptising an older person, he takes him by the hand. He may then dip the child in the font or pour (not sprinkle) water on his forehead. As he does so he says the words of baptism.

Facing the congregation, he then announces that the child has been received into 'the congregation of Christ's flock', and traces a cross on the candidate's forehead. This marks him publicly as belonging to Christ, just as a sheep is branded with his owner's mark. The sign of the cross will soon vanish as far as the eye is concerned, but this does not mean that the child no longer belongs to our Lord. In the words which follow we hear that he has become 'Christ's faithful soldier and servant *unto his life's end*'.

More prayers follow. First comes the Lord's Prayer,

Baptism is:

1. A mark of difference;
2. A sign of new birth;
3. A grafting into the Church;
4. A promise of forgiveness of sins;
5. Adoption as children of God;
6. Confirmation of faith;
7. Increase of grace.

Fig. 7 The Meaning of Baptism.

Then shall the priest take the child into his arms, or by the hand, and shall say to the Godfathers and Godmothers,

Name this child.

And then naming it after them, he shall dip it in the water, or pour water upon it, saying,

N. I baptise thee In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Then shall the priest say,

We receive this child into the congregation of Christ's flock, ✠ and do sign *him* with the sign of the Cross, in token that hereafter *he* shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under his banner, against sin, the world, and the devil; and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto *his* life's end. Amen.

Fig. 8 The Act of Baptism.

the family prayer of the Christian Church, followed by prayers for the child and for his home. The service is nearly over, but, before the blessing, the godparents are instructed in their duties, which are listed on the next page. If the 1928 Prayer Book is being used, they are asked to promise to carry out these responsibilities faithfully.

When some emergency requires that a child shall be privately baptised at home the last part of the service is omitted. If the baby lives, he is brought to the church for the last part of the service, which is his public reception into the family of the Church. If the priest is not satisfied that the child was baptised properly at home, he will then baptise him conditionally.

During the years after the execution of King Charles I in 1649 the Church of England passed through a period

Godparents are required to see that their godchildren are:

1. **taught**
   The (Apostles') Creed;
   The Lord's Prayer;
   The Ten Commandments;
   and all other things which a Christian should know and believe.
2. **brought up**
   to lead a godly and Christian life.
3. **prepared and brought**
   to the Bishop to be confirmed.

Fig. 9 The duties of Godparents.

when its services were suppressed. It was not until after the return of King Charles II in 1660 that the national Church was again able to take up its ministry. Because large numbers of people had not been baptised during the Commonwealth, the form of adult baptism which, as we have already seen, was primarily intended for use in the colonies, was used a great deal.

Because adult candidates are able to answer for themselves, the service is slightly different in form. To make sure that an adult who wishes to be baptised is really sincere in his desire to become a Christian, at least a week's notice must be given to the bishop. Sponsors, or witnesses, are required, but their function is rather different from that of a child's godparents. At the baptism of an adult their chief duty is to add their testimony that the candidate is sincere in seeking baptism. The vows are made by the candidate himself.

At the end of the service for the baptism of adults there

is a note to the effect that it is desirable that those who have been baptised in this way should come to be confirmed as soon as possible. There is also a form of conditional baptism for use when it is not certain whether the candidate has been baptised previously.

In the Roman Catholic Church the ceremony is much more elaborate. Baptismal water is blessed on Easter Eve or Whitsun Eve, and is kept for use as needed. There are prayers for the exorcism of evil spirits, salt—the symbol of wisdom and purification—is placed in the candidate's mouth, and he is then anointed with spittle to represent the opening of the senses.[1] After the vow renouncing the devil the candidate is anointed with chrism, a mixture of olive oil and balsam. After the baptism a white veil is placed on the candidate's head, and a lighted candle is put into his hand.

Congregationalists and Methodists follow the catholic practice of baptising infants. They, too, use water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. The Baptists and some smaller bodies practise only the baptism of adult believers by total immersion.

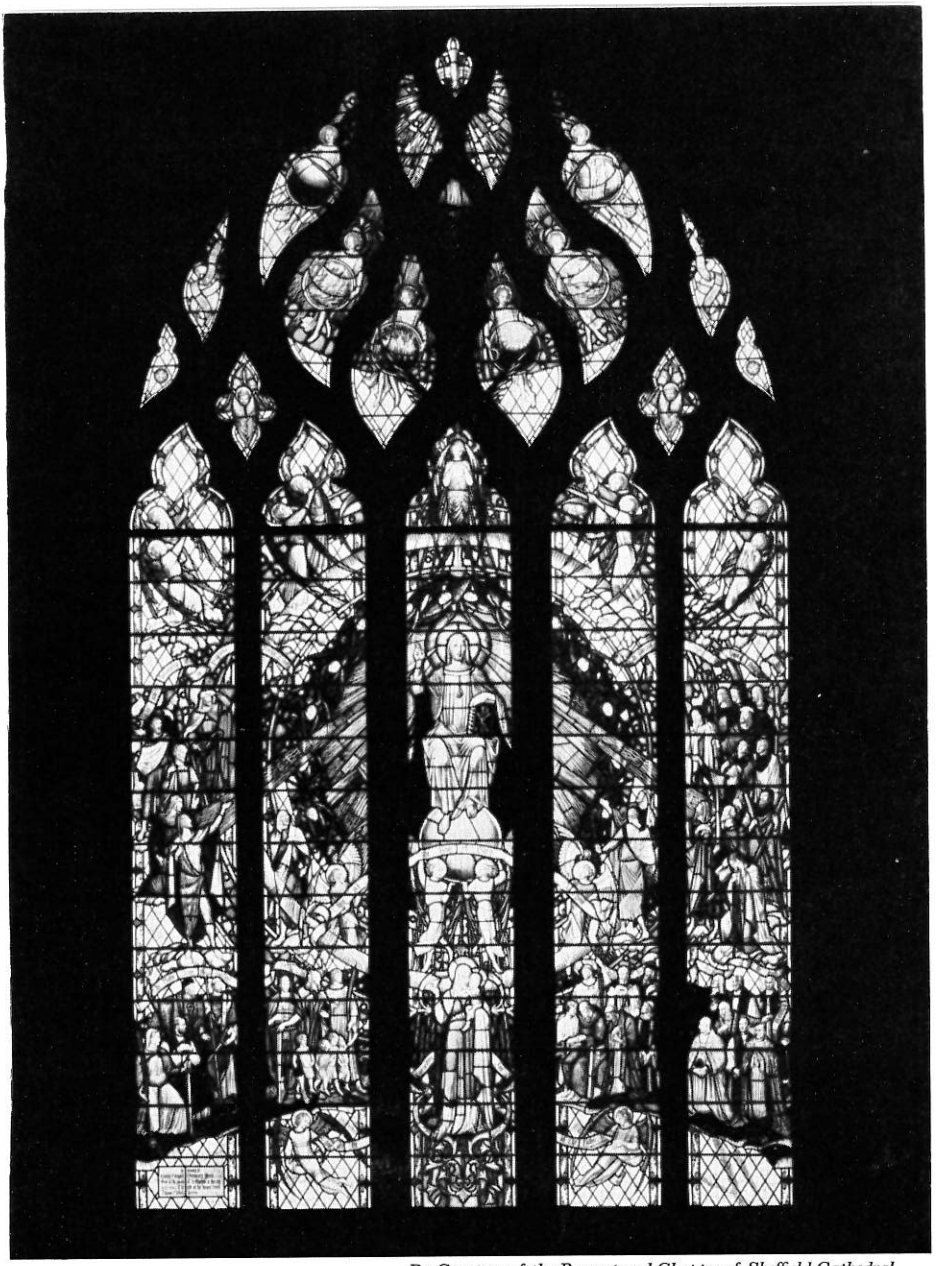
Because a person can be baptised only once, and because baptism by a layman is valid, no Christian body requires the rebaptism of those who join it from another, provided there is no doubt that the necessary conditions have been observed. In cases where there is some uncertainty conditional baptism is administered.

At the beginning of the baptismal service in the Prayer Book we are reminded of one of the stories in the Bible—the account of the Flood, a great disaster which swept through the valleys of the Tigris and the Euphrates, submerging everything in its path and drowning men,

[1] See the story of the healing of a blind man in St John 9.1–12.

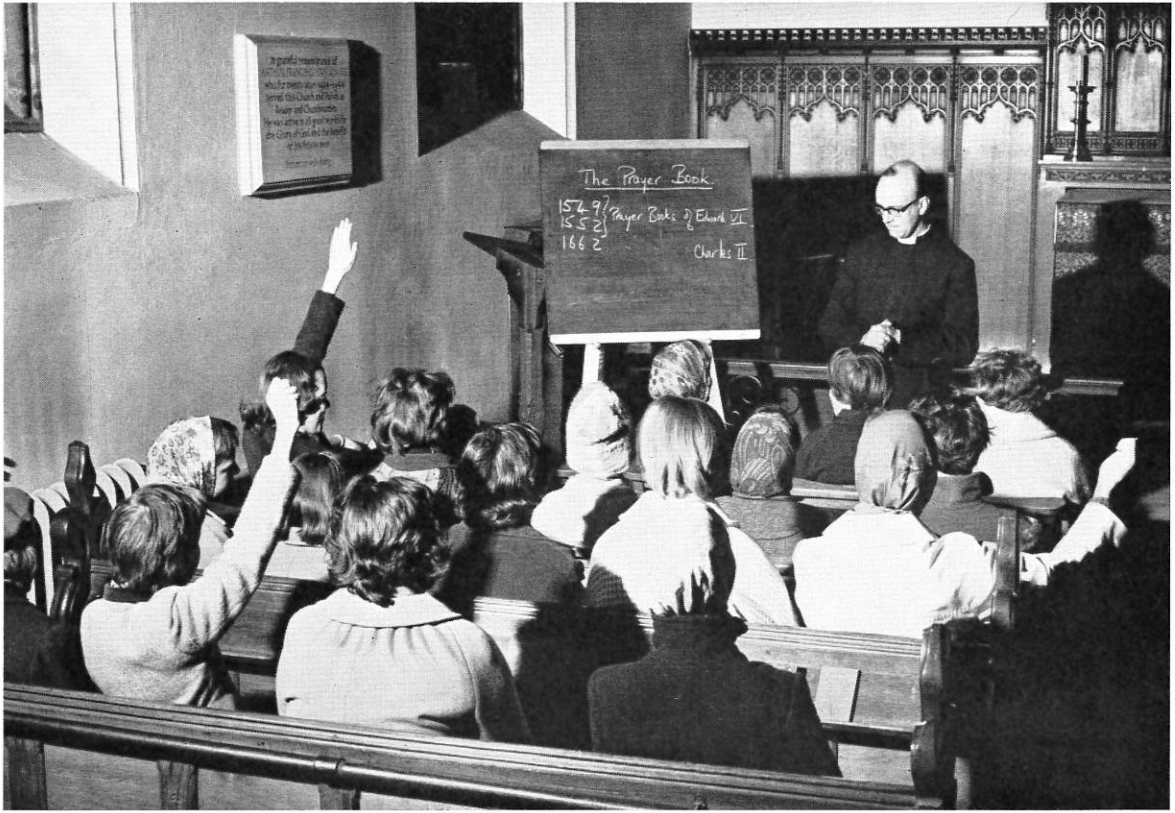
women, and children.[1] Only Noah, his family, and the animals they had taken with them were saved in the great ship which Noah had built. Life, too, has its storms, and there are times when the floods seem ready to overwhelm us. On such occasions there is one place where we may be safe, the place to which we were brought at our baptism —the ark of Christ's Church.

[1] For a vivid account of the evidence relating to the Flood see Sir Leonard Woolley's book, *Ur of the Chaldees* (Penguin), pp. 15–21.



By Courtesy of the Provost and Chapter of Sheffield Cathedral

3. The Te Deum Window in Sheffield Cathedral



4. A Confirmation class at Hurstpierpoint in Sussex

3

Praise Ye the Lord!

Morning and Evening Prayer

It is a long way from baptism to the next great cross-roads on the journey of life. Once a child has been received into the Church he is a member of it, but he is not yet ready to take a full part in its worship. For that he must wait until he has reached 'years of discretion', and can understand fully what he is doing. Nevertheless, his godparents will see that he goes to church regularly, and he may well attend the public worship of Morning and Evening Prayer.

These services are to be found only in the Church of England and its daughter churches, and have grown out of the daily prayer or 'hours' of the monks. The first duty of a monk is to pray—for the world, for his monastery, for the place where he lives, and for himself.

The monks were roused from their sleep at two o'clock in the morning, when the bell of the monastery church called them to Matins and Lauds. They then returned to their rest until six o'clock, when they made their way to the church for Prime. It is these three services which have contributed to our own service of Morning Prayer. The 'lesser hours' were Terce at nine o'clock, Sext at midday, and None at three in the afternoon. Vespers were sung

Morning Prayer

Matins
The Venite
The Te Deum

Lauds
The Benedictus
The 'Proper' Collect for the Day
The Second Collect

Prime
The Quicunque Vult
The Third Collect

Evening Prayer:

Vespers
The Magnificat
The 'Proper' Collect for the Day
The Second Collect

Compline
The Nunc Dimittis
The Creed
The Third Collect

Fig. 10 How Morning and Evening Prayer have been built around the 'Hours'.

	Morning Prayer	Evening Prayer
PREPARATION	Scripture Sentence Exhortation General Confession Absolution	
PRAISE, THANKSGIVING, FAITH	The Lord's Prayer Versicles and Responses	
	The Venite	—
	Psalms Old Testament Lesson	
	The Te Deum *or* the Benedicite	The Magnificat *or* the Cantate Domino
	New Testament Lesson	
	The Benedictus *or* the Jubilate Deo	The Nunc Dimittis *or* the Deus Misereatur
	The Creed	
PRAYER	The Mutual Salutation The Invitation The Kyrie or Lesser Litany The Lord's Prayer Versicles and Responses The First, or 'Proper' Collect for the Day	
	The Second Collect for Peace	The Second Collect for Peace
	The Third Collect for Grace	The Third Collect for Protection
	The 'State' Prayers[1] 1. For the Queen 2. For the Royal Family 3. For the Clergy and People	
	The Prayer of St Chrysostom The Grace	

Fig. 11 Morning and Evening Prayer. The sermon may be preached after the Grace, or after the Collects.

[1] Instead of these prayers, other suitable prayers are often substituted. These are generally known as the *Intercessions*.

before darkness fell and Compline 'completed' the day. After Compline came the 'Great Silence', when all talking was forbidden. Evening Prayer is taken partly from Vespers and partly from Compline.

Sometimes these services are called Matins and Evensong. Often they are referred to as the daily offices because the rule at the beginning of the Prayer Book orders them to be used each day in every parish, and adds that a bell should be tolled beforehand so that people may come to church if they wish to do so. Because they are much the same in plan, we will look at them together, noticing the differences where they occur.

Until 1552 the daily offices began with the Lord's Prayer, but at that time the compilers of the Prayer Book added the introduction which is now familiar to us. They believed that, no matter how hard we have tried to live a Christian life, every one of us is constantly doing things which are wrong, and that each time we do so we are displeasing God. When we come to worship him, the first thing we must do is to tell God that we are sorry and ask for his forgiveness. After one or two sentences from the Bible about the need for repentance, we are invited to join in the *General Confession*. This is called 'general' for two reasons. In the first place it is not intended as the confession of any particular sin and, secondly, it is for the use of the congregation as a whole rather than for single individuals. In other words, it is for people generally, confessing their sins generally. An alternative form of confession is sometimes used nowadays.

After the Confession comes the *Absolution*, when the priest reminds us that God is always ready to forgive those who are genuinely sorry for what they have done amiss. If there is no priest present, and the service is being taken

1662

Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Maker of all things, Judge of all men; We acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, Which we, from time to time, most grievously have committed, By thought, word, and deed, Against thy Divine Majesty, Provoking most justly thy wrath and indignation against us. We do earnestly repent, And are heartily sorry for these our misdoings; The remembrance of them is grievous unto us; The burden of them is intolerable. Have mercy upon us, Have mercy upon us, most merciful Father; For thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, Forgive us all that is past; And grant, that we may ever hereafter Serve and please thee In newness of life, To the honour and glory of thy Name; Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

1928

We Confess to God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, that we have sinned in thought, word and deed, through our own grievous fault. Wherefore we pray God to have mercy upon us.

Fig. 12 The General Confession, 1662 and 1928.

by a deacon or a reader, the Absolution is omitted. In its place a prayer may be said asking for God's forgiveness.[1]

Having confessed our sins, we are ready to join in praising God. The early Christians were Jews who already used the *Psalter*, the name sometimes given to the Book of Psalms in the Old Testament, and for many years this was the only hymn-book used in the Church. Since 1549 the translation in the Prayer Book has been that of Miles Coverdale (1488–1568), Bishop of Exeter. Although the more accurate Authorized Version of the Bible had been issued in 1611, fifty-one years before the Prayer Book assumed its present form, Coverdale's version was so popular with the people, and was so 'singable', that it was not displaced by the later translation.

At Morning Prayer the *Venite* (Psalm 95) is sung before the psalms, unless it is one of those appointed for the day.

The Psalter has been divided so that in churches where Morning and Evening Prayer are said daily the whole is said or sung during the course of a month. On Sundays and other red-letter days most churches use the psalms prescribed in the table of *Proper Psalms for Sundays and Holy Days*. We still use the psalms in public worship, because through them we, like Jesus, can pour out our hearts to God, sometimes in praise or prayer, sometimes in despair. Some passages in the psalms call for God's punishment of our enemies. Even on the cross our Lord prayed, not for vengeance on those who had tried to destroy him, but that they might be forgiven.[2] It is in the light of his love for those who crucified him that these passages are sometimes omitted today.

After the psalms we listen to the word of God in the

[1] Often the collect for the twenty-first Sunday after Trinity.
[2] St Luke 23.34. Compare this with the dying prayer of St Stephen for the men who stoned him (Acts 7.60).

Lessons, each of which is followed by a canticle. Readings from the Scriptures have always formed part of the worship of the Jewish synagogues, and it is not surprising to find that the Christians continued this custom. During the first century these were, like the readings in the synagogue, from the Old Testament. As time went by, however, certain Christian writings were also held to have been inspired by God, and these, collected together to form the New Testament, were also used in worship.

The word 'testament' means 'covenant' or 'agreement', and is the name given to the bond between God and his

Fig. 13 Miles Coverdale.

people. The Old Testament tells the story of the way in which God set apart the Jewish people in a special relationship with himself, especially through the covenant which he made with them after he had given the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai.[1] The Hebrew people became the people of God, and agreed to keep his Law. They quite often failed to live up to this high standard, and the prophets saw that there must be a new covenant based, not on a written Law, but on a sincere desire to serve God by a people who had set their hearts on loving him:

> Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, *I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.* And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.[2]

Today the first lesson is usually from the Old Testament, but the Book of Psalms is not used. We must remember that our Lord was born in a Jewish home, and learned to read and worship in the synagogue. He loved the Old Testament, and often quoted it in his teaching. From the first lesson we can learn something of the way in which God gradually revealed more about himself, and about his

[1] Exodus 20.1–17, and 24.3–18.
[2] Jeremiah 31.31–34.

plans for the world, to the Jewish people before he came among them in human form. We cannot understand Christianity fully unless we know something of the story of the people of Palestine.

The second lesson is always taken from the New Testament, and is either a story from the life of our Lord or from the history of the early Church, or a passage from one of the letters written by apostles during the first century. From this lesson we learn about the new covenant between God and man foreseen by the prophet Jeremiah in the passage quoted above, and stemming from our Lord's life and work. The old covenant had been sealed in the blood of oxen which were sacrificed at the foot of Mount Sinai; the new covenant was sealed in our Lord's blood which was sacrificed on Mount Calvary. The old covenant was rooted in law, the new covenant in love. The law was given by God that men might obey him, the love was offered by God that men might love him in return.

The *Canticles* which follow the lessons are hymns in the same kind of rhythm as the psalms, and come partly from the Bible, partly from the early Church. After the first lesson at Morning Prayer we sing (or say) the *Te Deum* or the *Benedicite*.[1] The *Te Deum* is one of the greatest hymns of praise ever written, and recounts the way in which all creation joins in praising God:

> We praise thee, O God . . .
> All the earth doth worship thee . . .
> To thee all Angels cry aloud . . .
> To thee Cherubim and Seraphim: continually do cry . . .
> The glorious company of the Apostles: praise thee.
> The goodly fellowship of the Prophets: praise thee.

[1] The curious names of the canticles are really the first words of their Latin versions. Thus, *Te Deum Laudamus* means 'Thee, O God, we praise . . .', and *Benedicite Omnia Opera* means 'Bless, all ye works . . .'

The noble army of martyrs: praise thee.
The holy Church throughout all the world: doth acknowledge thee . . .

In the beautiful Chapel of the Holy Spirit in Sheffield Cathedral is a *Te Deum*.[1] At the top is a dove which represents the Spirit of God working through the six days of creation. The central figure of our Lord in glory is surrounded by figures of the *Te Deum*. To the left are the prophets, with John the Baptist pointing to the Christ. Below them are the martyrs, men and women who have given their lives for their faith: St Cecilia (Sicily, A.D. 176), St Boniface (Germany, A.D. 754), St Alban (A.D. 305), St Polycarp (Smyrna, A.D. 155), St Stephen, the first martyr, and the children whom Herod killed when he was trying to murder the Christ child. On the right are the apostles and, below them, the holy Church through all the world: William Temple (Archbishop of Canterbury, 1942–44), Bishop Shen (China, Bishop Heaslett (Japan, 1922–40), Bishop Gerard (Waiapu, New Zealand, 1938–44, and Assistant Bishop of Sheffield, 1944—), Grenfell of Labrador (1865–1940), John Wesley (1703–91), Apolo of the Pygmy Forest (1564–1933), St Aidan (Northumbria, A.D. 651), St Columba (Iona, A.D. 597), John Wycliffe (1329–84), James the Deacon (York, seventh century), St Cuthbert (Lindisfarne, A.D. 687), and the Venerable Bede (Jarrow, A.D. 673–735). When the cathedral is completed this magnificent vision of representatives of the catholic Church in all ages and in all lands will be revealed to people in the nave through open arches above the high altar.

The *Benedicite* is used after the first lesson at Morning Prayer at certain times of the year instead of the *Te Deum*.

[1] See Plate 3.

The Prayer Book no longer specifies when it is to be used, but it is most commonly heard in Advent and Lent.[1] It forms part of the *Song of the Three Holy Children* put into the mouths of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego when they were thrown into the fiery furnace for refusing to worship the image set up by King Nebuchadnezzar.[2]

After the second lesson at Morning Prayer comes either the *Benedictus* or the *Jubilate*. The former is the song of thanksgiving in which the aged priest Zacharias praised God when he had recovered his speech after the birth of his son, John the Baptist.[3] The *Jubilate* is the hundredth psalm, and is familiar to many people in another form as the hymn, 'All people that on earth do dwell'.

At Evening Prayer the alternatives after the first lesson are the *Magnificat* and the *Cantate Domino*. The *Magnificat* is the thanksgiving of our Lord's mother after her visit to Elisabeth, the mother of John the Baptist.[4] It has become one of the favourite hymns of the Christian Church. The *Cantate Domino* is Psalm 98.

The second lesson at Evening Prayer is followed either by the *Nunc Dimittis*, or by the *Deus Misereatur*. The first of these is the song of the old priest Simeon, who had been promised that he should not die until he had seen the Saviour.[5] The second is Psalm 67.

At both Morning and Evening Prayer the second canticle is followed by the Apostles' Creed. When services were said in Latin the first word of the creeds was *Credo* which means 'I believe'. When we repeat one of the creeds[6]

[1] The 1549 Prayer Book ordered its use in Lent.
[2] Daniel 3.
[3] St Luke 1.68–79.
[4] St Luke 1.46–54.
[5] St Luke 2.29–32.
[6] The other creed commonly in use is the Nicene Creed, which is used in the Holy Communion (see page 63). The so-called Athanasian Creed, which the Prayer Book orders to be used on thirteen holy days during the year, is not, strictly speaking, a creed, neither is it the work of St Athanasius.

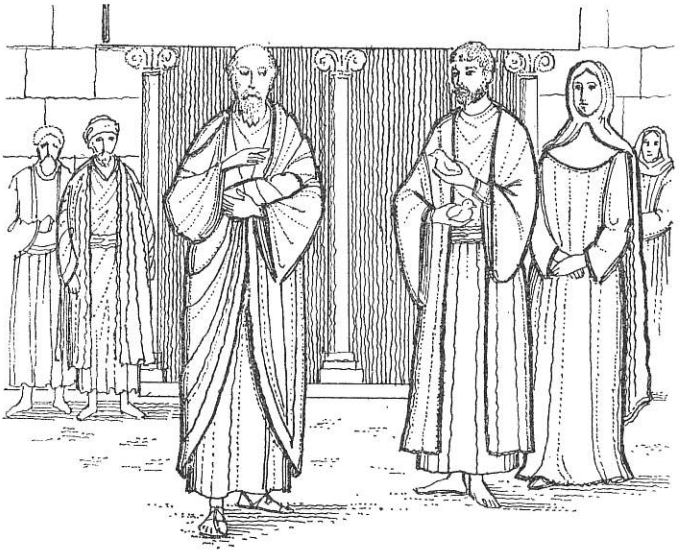


Fig. 14 Simeon blessing the infant Jesus.

we declare our belief in the teaching about God which the Church has handed down from generation to generation. The Apostles' Creed takes its name from the fact that it states, very simply, the teaching of the apostles. It is probably a development of the baptismal creed of the early Church, when those who were being baptised were required to declare their faith before receiving the sacrament. The earliest form was the simple statement, 'Jesus is Lord'.

The Apostles' Creed begins with God as Father and Creator—the father of all men, and the maker of all things. Our Lord often referred to God as 'Father', especially when he was speaking to him in prayer. The second part of the creed is a short summary of the chief events of our

Lord's life on earth, and records our faith in his birth, his passion, and his death, not forgetting his promise to return to judge the quick[1] and the dead. Finally, the creed proclaims our belief in the Holy Spirit and the universal Church, and looks forward to life after death in the communion of saints.

We now reach the part of the service when we bring our needs to God, and ask him to grant our requests if they are in accordance with his will. First comes the *Lesser Litany*, asking for God's mercy, and this is followed by the *Lord's Prayer*, the family prayer of the Christian Church. This is the prayer given by our Lord to his disciples when they asked him to teach them to pray,[2] and it is the model on which all the greatest prayers have been founded. When we say it we ask God quite simply to fulfil our needs, so that we may work for his kingdom and do his will.

It may seem strange that the Lord's Prayer is used twice in one service; indeed, some people feel that this is one of the 'vain repetitions' against which our Lord warned us. This use of the Lord's Prayer is not, however, simply a vain repetition: he was simply warning his followers against thinking that if they just repeated a prayer many times without thinking about what they were saying their requests would be granted automatically. If you look at Fig. 11 on page 23, you will see that the Lord's Prayer occurs at the beginning of the service of praise and thanksgiving and quite near the beginning of the service of prayer.

On the first occasion we use it in honour of our Lord and as a summary of the service which follows. St Augustine said, 'The daily lessons which you hear in church are daily bread, and the hymns you hear and repeat are daily

[1] This word means 'living'. [2] St Matthew 6.9–13.

bread.' Bearing this in mind, we are asking God to give us our spiritual food as we listen to the words of the Bible. In the service of prayer we ask God to bless our special needs during the coming day, and use it as the model on which all our prayers are based.

The *Suffrages* follow: these are versicles (said by the minister), each being followed by a response made by the people. Then come the *Collects*—three short prayers—the first of which is the collect for the day.[1] At Morning Prayer this is followed by the Collect for Peace and the Collect for Grace. The Collect for Peace used at Evening Prayer is different, and is followed by the beautiful Collect for Aid against All Perils.

'In Quires and Places where they sing' the anthem follows, although in most parish churches it is now customary to sing a hymn. In the Prayer Book the service concludes with the *State Prayers*. The first of these prayers is for the Queen, the second for the Royal Family, and the third for the Clergy and People. Finally we gather all our prayers together in the words of St John Chrysostom (A.D. 347–407),[2] asking that they may be granted as God sees best for us. Having asked God to bless our needs, we recognise that it is he who knows what is good for us and, following the example of our Lord as he waited for his arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, we say: 'Nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.'[3]

In many parish churches the State Prayers are replaced on Sundays by a group of prayers which are then referred to as the *Intercessions*. Sometimes these are taken from the occasional prayers and thanksgivings which follow the

[1] See page 62.
[2] See Book II, page 72. The nickname 'Chrysostom' means 'golden-mouthed', a name which seems particularly appropriate when we study the words of this prayer.
[3] St Mark 14.36.

Litany in the Prayer Book; often they are drawn from quite different sources. It is possible in this way to introduce prayers which are especially suitable for the season at which they are being used, or which refer to events which are taking place, or which are related to the subject of the sermon. In some churches these prayers are said after the sermon.

Morning and Evening Prayer end with the *Grace*, taken from 2 Corinthians 13.14. Strictly speaking, the sermon does not form part of the service itself, but it has been usual for many years for a sermon to be preached at the end of these services on Sundays.

There is no rule about the choice of subjects for the sermon. Sometimes it is based on one of the lessons for the day, sometimes it is related to the theme for the day, sometimes the preacher may try to explain what he believes to be God's will about events which are taking place in the world. A great modern scholar, Dr J. S. Whale, once said that the preacher's duty is 'to take the gold of the Bible and to mint it in the coinage of the present day'. Gold is a precious metal, valuable in itself and highly prized all over the world for many centuries. Gold coins were in use in the Roman Empire in the time of our Lord, and the metal was employed for making coins in common use in England until a few years ago. The same gold could have been used for either, but Roman and English coins looked very different. The Victorian sovereign would not have been recognised by a Roman merchant, neither would a nineteenth-century London shopkeeper have been willing to accept a coin of the reign of Claudius.

Like gold, the word of God as found in the Bible is very precious, and its value does not change with the passing of time. Gold is more acceptable as money when

it has been made into recognisable coins: in the same way the preacher must take the teaching of God and apply it to modern situations where its value can be easily assessed.

Not long ago two gangs of teenagers met in a dark back street of one of our great cities. For some reason which no one can really explain, a fight started. At first they used fists; then someone found an old milk bottle and knocked the end off it. Before long one boy was lying on the pavement with serious injuries, and the gangs melted away, terrified by what would happen if the police appeared. The onlookers dispersed lest they might be blamed for what had happened. An officer of one of the local churches glanced over his shoulder at the bleeding lad—but he had his reputation to think of, and he was anxious not to be mixed up in this sort of thing.

Another passer-by hurried on—he and the motionless

Invocation (*Calling on God*)
Almighty God, who calledst Luke the Physician, whose praise is in the Gospel, to be an Evangelist, and Physician of the Soul;

Petition (*Request*)
May it please thee, that, by the wholesome medicines of the doctrine delivered by him, all the diseases of our souls may be healed;

Plea for Our Lord's Mercy
through the merits of thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Fig. 15 The Collect for St Luke's Day, arranged to show the three parts of this form of prayer which 'collects' together the prayers of individual members of a congregation. At one time the third part always took the same form: 'through Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord who liveth and reigneth with thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever'.

5. 'Defend, O Lord, this thy child . . .'

6. A celebration of the Holy Communion at St Giles Church, Lincoln

victim were alone in the badly lit street, and he was afraid of the consequences if the gangs came back and found him trying to help. Besides, he was a local councillor who had claimed that his party had swept hooliganism from the city. The next wayfarer was a West Indian. He had not lived in England many weeks, but it was long enough to have had the window of his basement flat broken three times by one of the gangs who didn't like 'dirty niggers'. Slinging the youth across his shoulder in a fireman's lift, he carried him downstairs and put him gently on the bed. Leaving his wife to clean the boy's wounds, he walked to the nearest telephone box to call an ambulance and the police.

Now turn to St Luke's Gospel and read verses 25 to 37 of chapter 10 to see whether you can discover the coinage in which this teaching was minted almost two thousand years ago.

The Litany

This is a convenient place to consider the Litany, which, although it does not form part of the services of Morning or Evening Prayer, is ordered to be said after Morning Prayer on Sundays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

The Litany consists of a number of short petitions which are said by the minister, and in each case the people make these prayers their own by a response. The first four responses repeat the petition exactly, the others, such as 'Spare us, good Lord', or 'We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord', complete the petition.

Litanies have been in use in the Church since the fourth century—the Litany of the Book of Common Prayer is based on one drawn up by Archbishop Cranmer in 1544, when England was at war with Scotland and France.

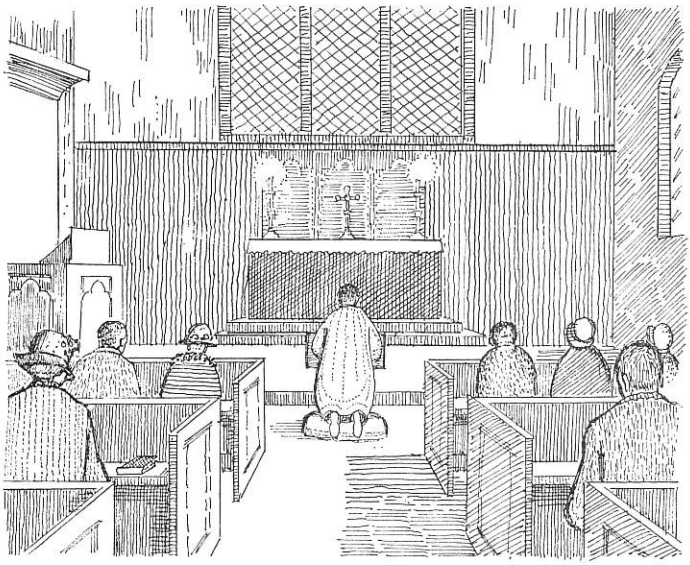


Fig. 16 The Reading of the Litany.

In some churches the Litany is used before the Holy Communion on Sundays in Lent—and sometimes in Advent as well. It is not used so frequently in place of the Intercessions at Morning Prayer on Sundays, but many churches keep up the practice of saying it on the prescribed weekdays. It is very widely used on Good Friday and Rogation Sunday.

The Litany forms part of the ordination service, and may also be heard on a number of special occasions. At the consecration of a churchyard it is customary for the clergy and people to make a circuit of the ground to be consecrated, the bishop saying the versicles and the people replying.

4

Defend, O Lord, this Thy Child

Catechism and Confirmation

On the sabbath after he reaches the age of thirteen a Jewish boy takes part in a ceremony called the *barmitzvah.* Having accompanied his father to the synagogue, he stands up to read a lesson from the Law (one of the first five books of the Old Testament), and another from the Prophets. The rabbi blesses the boy, who is now regarded as being old enough to distinguish right from wrong, and able to take his part as an adult member of the Jewish faith. This follows many months of training during which the boy has been taught the meaning of his faith, and prepared for the service.

Many clubs and societies have special ceremonies by which they welcome new members, and it is not surprising to find that the Church also takes care to ensure that its members are admitted to the full exercise of their responsibility on a solemn occasion. This is known as Confirmation, not primarily because the candidate confirms that he intends to keep the promises made at his baptism by his godparents—although, in fact, he does so—but because he is confirmed and strengthened by the Holy Spirit in his ability to keep those vows.

In the very early days of the Church most candidates for baptism were adults who made a short statement of

their belief as part of the ceremony. They were then baptised, one of the apostles laying his hands on the candidate's head. As time went by, and the Church grew rapidly, it was not always possible for an apostle to be present at a baptism. Thus the two services became separated, baptism being administered in the local church by the presbyter (or priest as we should call him today), whilst confirmation was left until it was possible for an apostle (in later times a bishop) to visit the district. The first recorded confirmation of those who had been baptised at an earlier time is to be found in the account of the visit of Peter and John to the church in Samaria, where they confirmed converts who had been baptised by Philip.[1]

This naturally led to a period of preparation between baptism and confirmation, during which the candidate was taught the meaning of the Christian faith. At one time, before it was compulsory for everyone to go to school, most people could not read or write. To meet their needs the Prayer Book provided a catechism, a simple statement of the faith in the form of questions and answers which could be learnt by heart. It became the duty of every parish priest to teach the catechism on Sundays and holy days after the second lesson at Evening Prayer.

Parents were also given a duty, and the words of the Prayer Book sound strange in modern times:

> And all fathers, mothers, and dames, shall cause their children, servants, and prentices (which have not learned the Catechism) to come to the church at the time appointed, and obediently to hear, and be ordered by the Curate,[2] until such time as they have learned all that is here appointed for them to learn.

[1] Acts 8.14–17.

[2] The word *Curate* here means the parish priest as, strictly speaking, it always does. He is the person who has the 'cure' (or care) of souls in a parish. The modern use of the word to mean the assistant clergy of a parish is not accurate; they are correctly known as assistant curates.

So, each Sunday, all the children of the parish would troop to the church, until they knew the catechism by heart and were ready to be confirmed.

Times have changed, and it is not now the usual practice to make children learn the whole of the Catechism by heart. For many years Sundays schools, which grew out of the catechism classes, have tried to teach children what the Christian faith means by more interesting methods, and the final preparation for confirmation usually takes place in a series of confirmation classes. These are usually held on a week-day evening, and are spread over a period which may vary from three to twelve months. Today we feel that it is more important that those who are being confirmed should really understand the nature of the step

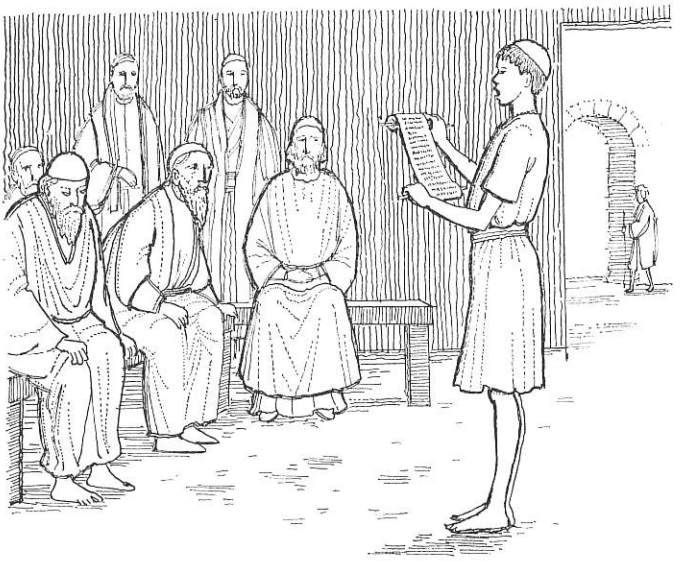


Fig. 17 The Jewish Barmitzvah.

they are taking, rather than that they should be able to answer a number of questions, with no guarantee that they have grasped the meaning of what they are saying. It is generally expected, however, that they should know the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed by heart before they are presented to the bishop for confirmation.

Fig. 18 Robert Raikes, the founder of Sunday Schools.

Even so, the Catechism lies at the heart of all preparation for confirmation, and to this end it has been revised so that it is more easily understood by twentieth-century children.

The first part of the Catechism takes the child back to his baptism, and reminds him that his godparents made certain promises on his behalf and undertook to help him to keep them until he was old enough to take them upon himself. This is followed by the Apostles' Creed, which we have already studied in the last chapter, and a reminder that the creed teaches us belief in

God the Father, who has made us, and all the world;

God the Son, who has redeemed us, and all mankind;

God the Holy Spirit, who makes us, and all God's people, holy.

This leads quite naturally to the godparents' promise that the child should keep God's commandments, and the Ten Commandments are set out in full. These laws were set down in their present form more than three thousand years ago, and the next part of the Catechism (often called

Fig. 19 Our Lord's summary of the Law and the Ten Commandments.

The Two Great Commandments Mk. 12.28–31	*The Ten Commandments Exodus 20.3–17*
1. The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.	1. Thou shalt have none other gods but me.
	2. Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down to them nor worship them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, and visit the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and shew mercy unto them that love me, and keep my commandments.
	3. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.
	4. Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath-day. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all that thou hast to do; but the seventh day

is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. In it thou shalt do no work, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant, thy cattle and the stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it.

2. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

There is none other commandment greater than these.

5. Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

6. Thou shalt do no murder.

7. Thou shalt not commit adultery.

8. Thou shalt not steal.

9. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

10. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his servant, nor his maid, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is his.

the 'Duties') explains how it is possible to keep the commandments in the modern world. The Ten Commandments really fall into two parts: our duty towards God, and our duty towards our neighbour, and the Catechism divides the duties between the two 'Great Commandments' quoted by our Lord.[1] You will notice that the Great Commandments are based on love. It is our duty to love God because he is our Father; it is also our duty to love our fellow men because, since God is the Father of us all, we all belong to the same family. All the other duties follow quite naturally from this. We do not wish to harm or displease those whom we love, and therefore we do nothing which will hurt them in any way.

Can you honestly say you have never harmed anyone you love? Of course not. What about the day you quarrelled with one of your friends, and sulkily refused to speak for a week? Or the day you were just downright rude? The makers of the Catechism knew all about misbehaviour, and understood that we find it difficult always to be loving and kind either to God or to other people just by our own strength. For this we need God's help, and to have God's help we must ask for it—in other words, we must pray. Like the disciples we need to be taught to pray, and in what better way can we learn than through our Lord's own prayer? It is in these words that we ask God to send us his help (the Catechism calls it 'grace'), so that we may be more able to keep his commandments.

The last part of the Catechism deals with the two 'Gospel sacraments' of Baptism and Holy Communion. These are the two essential sacraments, each with its outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace.

[1] St Mark 12.28–31.

In baptism the outward and visible sign is the water with which a person is baptised in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. By this act the baptised person, who has already begun his life in his human family, is 'born again' into the family of Christ's Church. He is given a fresh start, and God's grace to help him make the most of it.

In the Holy Communion the outward sign consists of the bread and the wine which we receive in obedience to our Lord's command: 'Do this in remembrance of me.' As our ordinary food strengthens our bodies, so our Lord strengthens our souls in this sacrament through his body and blood which he offered on the Cross for our sakes.

The long preparation over, the candidates are ready to be confirmed. During the course of a year each bishop visits a large number of churches for this purpose. Each of these churches is usually the centre for the surrounding parishes, so that a candidate may not necessarily be confirmed in his own parish church. In addition there are several confirmations in the cathedral, some of these frequently being reserved for adult candidates. At last the great day comes, and the candidates are seated in the front pews of the church, the boys on the right and girls on the left. The bishop's chair has been brought from the sanctuary and stands at the entrance to the chancel, facing the congregation. The choir takes their places, followed by the clergy of the parishes from which the candidates come and, last of all, the bishop and his chaplain. The alternative service in the 1928 Prayer Book is now most generally used.

Sitting in his chair the bishop reads the account of the first confirmation from the eighth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, reminding the congregation of a journey

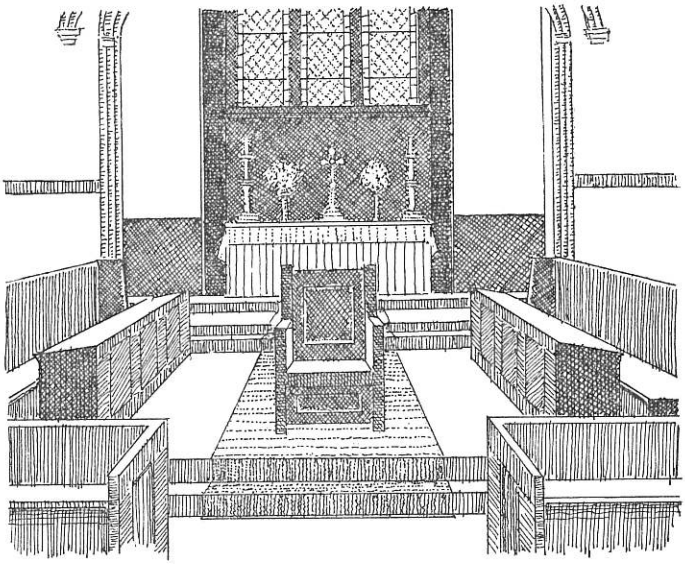


Fig. 20 The bishop's chair placed ready for Confirmation.

taken by Peter and John many years ago for just the same reason that he has come to the church this day. Philip had been preaching in Samaria, and had made many converts to the Christian faith, but, as yet, the new Christians were not inspired by the Holy Ghost. When the two apostles arrived they gathered the people together, 'then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost'. The Bible, the bishop goes on to explain, teaches that a special gift of the Holy Spirit comes through the laying-on of hands with prayer, and he tells the candidates that they must now make for themselves the vows which their godparents had made on their behalf when they were baptised.

One by one the questions are put to the candidates, asking whether they are now prepared to believe and do those things which had previously been promised for them. To each question the candidates answer that they are willing to do so. The Prayer Book does not provide for a sermon during the service, but it is usual for the bishop to choose a suitable place to explain to the candidates in his own words the importance of the step they are undertaking. This is another crossroads on the journey of life, when each candidate chooses quite deliberately to take the route which is God's way, and to follow the kind of life about which he has learned in his confirmation classes. There can be no going back from this point, for,

Fig. 21 The first Confirmation.

Then all of them in order kneeling before the Bishop, he shall lay his hand upon the head of every one severally, saying,

DEFEND, O Lord, this thy child[1] with thy heavenly grace that *he* may continue thine for ever; and daily increase in thy Holy Spirit more and more until *he* come unto thy everlasting kingdom. Amen.

Fig. 22 The Act of Confirmation.

however far one may stray off the beaten track, the gift of the Holy Spirit at confirmation cannot be thrown away, or lost, or handed back. The candidates have accepted for themselves the guide who has been beside them ever since their baptism.

Remember that confirmation is the laying-on of hands *with prayer*. First the bishop prays for those who are about to be confirmed, asking God to send his blessing to each, so that they may be wise and understanding, strong and loyal. One by one (or two by two, if there are many) the candidates leave their pews and kneel before the bishop, boys and girls, men and women. For a few seconds, as they remain there, he places his hand upon the head of each and says the prayer of confirmation. Confirmed and strengthened by the Holy Spirit, they return to their seats.

When the last candidate has been confirmed, all present join in the Lord's Prayer. The bishop adds a further prayer for those who have just received the Holy Spirit, followed by one for the whole congregation. The service is almost over, but, before he gives his blessing, the bishop

[1]When confirming adults, the bishop may say: 'this thy servant.'

charges all present to live their lives according to the will of Christ:

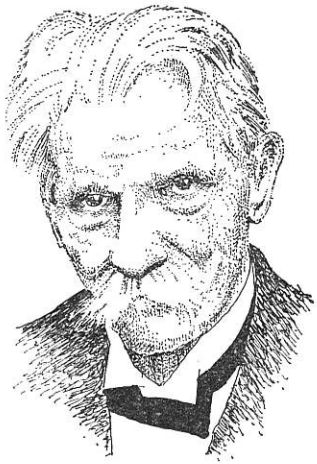
> Go forth into the world in peace;
> Be of good courage;
> Hold fast that which is good;
> Render to no man evil for evil;
> Strengthen the fainthearted;
> Support the weak;
> Help the afflicted;
> Love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

So the candidates are reminded of the promise they have just made to keep God's commandments—to love and serve God, and to love and serve their fellow men.

At the Jewish *barmitzvah* which was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter the father says: 'Blessed is God who has freed me from the responsibility of this child.' This means that the lad has reached what Christians call 'years of discretion' and, knowing the difference between right and wrong, he is able to make decisions for himself. In confirmation the candidate is strengthened by the Holy Spirit, so that he can fulfil his baptismal vows as a fully grown member of the Church, and can make decisions for himself knowing that he can rely on the guidance of the Holy Spirit to help him choose what is right.

Every time a bishop administers the rite of confirmation the Church gains some new full members. The whole time from baptism to confirmation has been a time of preparation. Now that they have been fully received into the Church the newly confirmed will be able, for the first time, to receive the Holy Communion and to take part in the central act of the Church's worship. This is now their privilege, but a privilege always carries with it a responsibility. They have promised God that they will, for the

St Francis of Assisi



Albert Schweitzer

Fr Damien

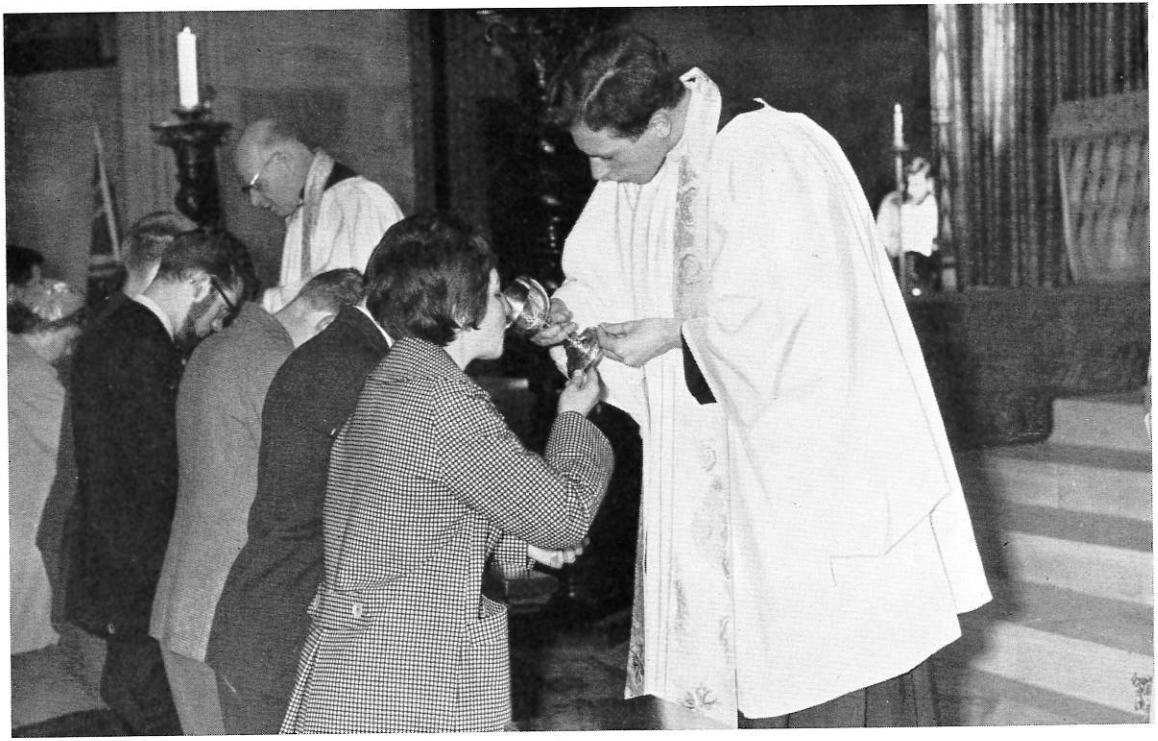
Trevor Huddleston

Fig. 23

rest of their lives, fulfil the promises which they have made. Without God's help this would be a foolish promise, and one which it would be quite impossible to keep.

When a person does something exceptionally well we say that he has been inspired. By this we really mean that he was spurred on by a spirit far greater than his own. Quite often we see men throwing away all chances of worldly success with little regard for their own comfort, sometimes of their own safety. The apostles faced persecution and death in order to preach about our Lord so that they might spread the good news of the Kingdom of God. St Francis of Assisi forsook his wealth to save souls. In 1913, Albert Schweitzer, pastor, doctor, and musician, turned his back on the western world which offered him success in so many fields, to found a hospital for the natives of Lambarene in the African jungle. These were men inspired by a courage far greater than their own.

It is not God's will that all of us should act in this way. We cannot all be like Father Damien, who continued to tend the lepers of Molokai even when he had caught the disease himself, or like Trevor Huddleston, who constantly challenged the South African Government after the second world war because of its treatment of coloured people. Yet each of us meet occasions in our own lives when our courage to do what is right is put to the test, and at those times we may be thankful that at our confirmation we became inspired, that we received the Holy Spirit, that we were given the strength to help us keep the promises which we made our own that day.



7. 'The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ which was shed for thee . . .'

8. Signing the marriage registers. One of the registers is kept permanently in the church; when it is full the other is sent to the Registrar-General's office at Somerset House, London

5

This do in Remembrance of Me

The Holy Communion

If you are taking a long journey, you will need some refreshment from time to time. Sometimes your legs will ache and you will feel tired. When he feels like this the wise traveller will stop for a rest and some food. Our journey through life is much the same in this respect—if we keep driving on without any kind of a break, we shall get very weary and very hungry. Just as we need regular meals for our bodies, so we need regular refreshment for our souls. Our Lord himself recognised both these needs. In his own prayer he taught us to say: 'Give us this day our daily bread', and at the Last Supper, as he took and blessed the bread and wine, he said: 'This do in remembrance of me.'

Because our Lord himself gave us this order, the Holy Communion has always been the central point of the worship of the Church. From the very beginning of the Church's history we read that the apostles and their followers 'continued steadfastly . . . in the breaking of bread and the prayers'.[1] In the *Didache*, a book prepared about seventy years after our Lord's death, are two beautiful prayers, which are printed on the next page,

[1] Acts 2.42.

We give thee thanks, O our Father, for the holy vine of thy son David, which is made known unto us through thy Son Jesus. Thine is the glory for ever and ever.

We give thee thanks, O our Father, for the life and knowledge which thou didst make known unto us through thy Son Jesus. Thine is the glory for ever and ever. As this broken bread was scattered on the cornfields and, being gathered together, became one, so may thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into thy kingdom; for thine is the glory and the power for ever and ever.

Fig. 24 The Communion Prayers from the Didache, (*c.* A.D. *100*)

and which were used in the Holy Communion at that time.

Fifty years later Justin Martyr wrote an account of a Celebration of the Holy Communion as he knew it, and it is interesting to compare what he has to say with the service as we know it today, and to see how little its essential features have altered. This is what Justin wrote:

And on the so-called day of the Sun there is a meeting of all of us who live in cities or in the country, and the memoirs of the Apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time allows. Then when the reader has ceased, the president gives by word of mouth his admonition and exhortation to follow these excellent things. Afterwards we all rise at once and offer prayers and, when we have ceased to pray, bread is brought, and wine and water, and the president likewise offers up prayers and thanksgivings to the best of his ability, and the people respond with their Amen. Then follows the distribution to each and the partaking of that for which thanks were given,

> and to them that are absent a portion is sent by the hand of the deacons. Everyone of those that are well-to-do and willing gives what he will according to his own purpose, and the collection is deposited with the president, and he it is who helps widows and orphans, and those that are in need through sickness or other causes, and those who are in prison, and the strangers who are staying. In short, he has the care of all who are in need.

If you read Justin's account carefully, you will see that the principal parts of the Holy Communion have remained unchanged to the present day. They are:

1. **The reading of the Scriptures** (now the Epistle and Gospel).
2. **The admonition and exhortation** (now the sermon or address).
3. **The prayers of the people** (now the Prayer for the Church, and the Confession).
4. **The bringing of bread and wine** (now the Offertory).
5. **The priest's prayers and thanksgivings** (now the Prayer of Humble Access and the Prayer of Consecration).
6. **The collection of alms for the poor and sick** (now the offertory of money by the people).
7. **The people's communion.**

During the past two thousand years the detailed form of the service has varied considerably, but the blessing and receiving of bread and wine and the reading of the account of the Last Supper have always formed the central part of the service. So, too, the name has changed from time to time, and you can see on the next pages some of the names which have been used in different times and places. These all stand for what is essentially the same service,

Fig. 25 Some names of the Holy Communion service.

The Holy Communion

'The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the *communion* of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the *communion* of the body of Christ?' (1 Cor. 10.16). The service is something which we do *in common* within the *community* of the Church.

The Eucharist

This is a Greek word meaning 'thanksgiving'.

The Mass

At one time only those who had been confirmed were allowed to stay for the whole service. The priest dismissed the unconfirmed with the words '*Ite missa est.*' ('Depart, it is the dismissal.') 'Mass' is a corruption of the Latin *missa.*

The Liturgy

This comes from a Greek word meaning 'public work'. It was applied to the Communion service because it is a duty laid upon us by the Lord. The word also has the meaning of 'worship', and this, the oldest name of the Holy Communion reminds us that worship is our most important duty.

The Sacrament

This term is sometimes used to distinguish the Holy Communion as the most important of the sacraments.

The Lord's Supper

This is the alternative name given in the Prayer Book: 'When ye come together, therefore, into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper' (1 Cor. 11.20).

The Breaking of Bread

This name commemorates the fact that our Lord took bread, blessed, and *broke it*.

The Blessing

This name commemorates the blessing of the bread and wine, and also reminds us that the service is a blessing to all who take part in it.

The Oblation

The word means 'offering'. In the Holy Communion we offer to God 'ourselves, our souls, and bodies', remembering that most perfect of all offerings—our Lord's sacrifice on the Cross.

The Mysteries

In many religions there are ceremonies which may be seen only by those who have been fully received. As this once applied to the Mass, it was a 'mystery' to those who had not been confirmed.

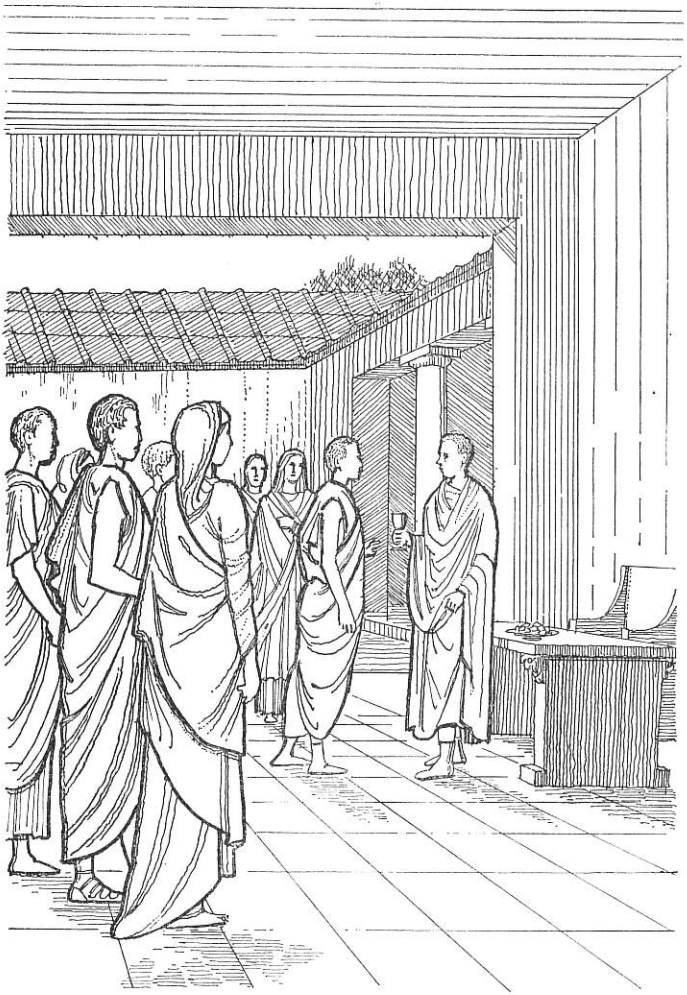


Fig. 26 The Holy Communion in the time of Justin Martyr (A.D. *150*).

but they indicate that in different ages the Church has seen more purpose in this ceremonial than the mere reception of communion. For instance, we offer ourselves in thanksgiving (*Eucharist*) and service (*Liturgy*), and we receive strength in the body and blood of Christ (*Communion*).

Sometimes the service is celebrated with fine vestments, elaborate ceremonial, and beautiful music; on other occasions it takes the simplest form. Always, however, it is the worship of the Church in obedience to our Lord's command on the night that he was betrayed.

Try, for a few moments, to imagine that scene. It was the eve of the Passover, and Jerusalem (which was quite a small town) was thronged with a million people who had come to the Temple for the greatest feast of the year. For a week Jesus had moved among the growing crowds who listened eagerly to him, and each night he had gone out of the city to the little village of Bethany to stay with his friends. On the eve of the Passover his disciples had prepared a meal in the guest room of a house in Jerusalem which may have belonged to the mother of Mark. The supper ended, Jesus took bread and wine and used them to explain to his disciples the meaning of his death.

On the next page you will find an outline of the Holy Communion service. The parts printed in italics are variations which are used in some churches, or additions in the 1928 Prayer Book. The ante-communion is a service of preparation, and the post-communion a service of thanksgiving in which we offer ourselves to God.[1]

The Ante-Communion

The service of preparation is centred on readings from the Bible—the 'word of God'. Only by listening to what

[1] The Latin words *ante* and *post* mean 'before' and 'after'.

THE ANTE-COMMUNION

Introit—a hymn or psalm
The Lord's Prayer
The Collect for Purity
The Ten Commandments
or our Lord's Summary of the Law
or the Kyries
The Collect for the Queen (often omitted today)
The Collect for the Day
The Epistle for the Day
The Gradual—a hymn
The Gospel for the Day
—The 'Proper'
The Nicene Creed
The Sermon

THE HOLY COMMUNION

The Offertory
(*a*) of bread and wine
(*b*) of alms for the sick and the needy
The Prayer for the Church
The Invitation
The General Confession
The Absolution
The Comfortable Words
The Sursum Corda ('Lift up your hearts')
The Preface—with Proper Prefaces at certain seasons
The Sanctus ('Holy, holy, holy')
The Benedictus (*'Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord'*)
The Prayer of Humble Access
The Prayer of Consecration
The Agnus Dei (*'O Lamb of God'*)
The Administration of the Holy Communion

THE POST-COMMUNION

The Lord's Prayer
The Prayer of Oblation
or the Prayer of Thanksgiving
The Gloria in Excelsis ('Glory be to God on high')
The Blessing

Fig. 27 The Order of the Holy Communion.

God has to say can we understand how to enter fully into the mystery of the Holy Communion, the most sacred part of the Church's worship. If the service is being sung, the choir and clergy enter the church during the singing of a hymn called the *Introit*. The priest alone says the *Lord's Prayer* and the *Collect for Purity*, which are really his preparation for the sacrament which he is to celebrate. If you read the words of this collect carefully, you will see how suitable they are to prepare us all, and we may well silently join in making this prayer our own. As we get ready to approach our Lord's own table we shut everything else out of our minds—our hopes and our worries, our work and our play—and concentrate on offering ourselves to him.

In the 1662 Prayer Book the *Ten Commandments* follow. These are really an Old Testament lesson with responses through which we ask God to help us to keep his laws. They were the word of God to the Israelites in the wilderness. When we were studying the Catechism you will remember that we saw that the Ten Commandments were summarised by our Lord in the *Two Great Commandments* and these are now often used instead of the Old Testament law. In many churches you will hear the *Kyries* instead of either form of the Commandments, and these may be said in Greek or in English. Sometimes each of the petitions of the Kyries is repeated three times. The two forms of the Kyries are as follows:

Greek	*English*
Kyrie, eleison	Lord have mercy
Christe, eleison	Christ have mercy
Kyrie, eleison.	Lord have mercy.

The *Collect for the Queen* is often omitted today, as the Queen is mentioned in the Prayer for the Church. We

have now reached the part of the service called the 'Proper' because—as distinct from the main framework of the service, which is called the 'Ordinary'—it varies from season to season. The Proper consists of three parts, the first of which is the *Collect for the Day*. This is a short prayer which *collects* the prayers of the congregation around some theme suitable to the occasion and offers them to God. Many of the collects in the Prayer Book were the work of Archbishop Cranmer, and some of them are his translations of ancient prayers. They are among the richest treasures of English literature, and many of them are also used at other suitable times. Sometimes you will hear two (or even three) collects. The collects for certain festivals are used for a week after the feast itself, and the collects for Ash Wednesday and the first Sunday in Advent are used daily throughout Lent and Advent in addition to the collect for the day.

The other portions of the Proper are the New Testament lessons. The first is the *Epistle*, for which we may sit or kneel. The former is the more usual practice today. This reading is normally taken from one of the letters written by the apostles, but occasionally it is from another part of the Bible. For example, on Ash Wednesday the passage 'for the Epistle' is from the book of the prophet Joel.

At one time a procession always took place between the Epistle and the Gospel, and a hymn known as the *Gradual* was sung at this point. Led by a cross, and accompanied by two candlebearers, a server carried the book of the Gospels in front of the priest to the rood-loft. This was a platform above the screen which separated the nave from the chancel. The word 'gospel' means 'God's story', and is the good news of the life and teaching of our Lord as

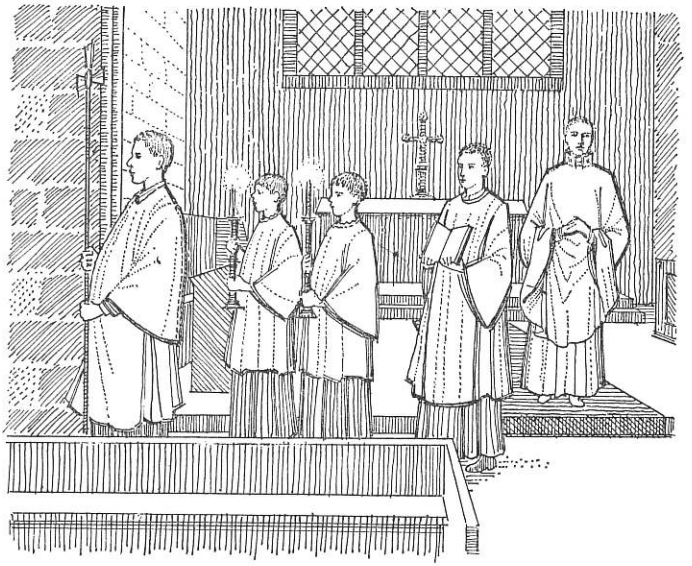


Fig. 28 The Gospel procession.

told in the first four books of the New Testament. The Gradual is often sung today, even though there may be no procession, and immediately it ends the whole congregation turns to face the reader of the *Gospel*, remaining standing in honour of the teaching of our Lord. This is the most solemn moment of the first part of the service.

Turning to face the east, we then declare our faith by repeating the words of the *Nicene Creed*. You will remember that our Lord is sometimes called 'the Light of the World', and in the Benedictus he is referred to as 'the Dayspring from on high'. Light comes into the world each morning as the sun springs into the eastern sky and, as we proclaim our faith in our Lord, it is fitting that we

face the east to welcome that Light which is greater than the sun. The Creed follows the lessons because it has grown naturally out of the teaching of the Bible about God and is a summary of our belief. This Creed is longer than the Apostles' Creed which is used at Morning and Evening Prayer. It was drawn up in A.D. 325 at the Council of Nicaea, which was called by the Emperor Constantine at a time when men were trying to tamper with the faith of the Church. With slight variations made during the forty years after it was written, the Creed has come down unchanged to us from that day. If its words seem strange to you, remember that every word counted at the time when it was prepared, and it was important that there should be no doubt about its exact meaning. It is also necessary to remember that many of the words used in the English translation of the Creed have changed their meaning in everyday usage. It is worth while trying to find out exactly what the writers of the Creed meant when they set their words down.

The *Sermon* is the conclusion of the ante-communion, and is usually based on either the Epistle or the Gospel. Having prepared ourselves to hear God's word, we have listened to it in the readings, declared our faith in God in the Creed, and heard it applied to the conditions of modern life in the sermon.

The Holy Communion

We now prepare to meet our Lord at his table. Bread and wine are brought to the altar, and are prepared for consecration. These elements are sometimes carried to the sanctuary by members of the congregation so that they represent part of the people's offering. Like the Christians described by Justin Martyr, we also make offerings of

money which are put into a special fund, administered by the rector (or vicar) and the churchwardens, to be devoted to the sick and needy of the parish. Having offered our gifts, we now offer our prayers in the words of the *Prayer for the Church*. No one is forgotten in this prayer: we ask for God's blessing on the Queen and her Parliament, and on the rulers of other nations; we pray for the clergy, that they may be faithful in their duties; we pray for all men, and especially for ourselves; and we pray for all those in special need: 'in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity'. Finally, we join ourselves as members of the Church on earth with all who have died, asking that God will give us grace to follow their good examples, so that we may share with them the joy of heaven.

Turning to face the congregation, the priest invites us to take part in the Holy Communion, but first we join in the words of the *General Confession*. The *Absolution* proclaims God's mercy on those who have sinned and are truly sorry for what they have done, but, in case this is not sufficient to reassure those who believe they have sinned gravely, the priest adds the *Comfortable Words*. At one time the word 'comfort' meant 'making strong', and these passages are intended to strengthen our belief that God will really pardon those who are willing to be forgiven:

> Come unto me all that travail and are heavy-laden, and I will refresh you.
>
> So God loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, to the end that all who believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.
>
> This is a true saying, and worthy of all men to be received, That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

> If any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins.

Now that we have shut off the outside world, and have confessed our sins, the priest tells us to lift up our hearts in praise. At five seasons of the year a 'Proper' is used at this point, giving us special reasons for praising God at those times. Once more the Church on earth and the Church in heaven are joined in praising God, this time in the words of the great angelic hymn:

> Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of thy glory. Glory be to thee, O Lord most high.

Fig. 29 'Blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord'—the first Palm Sunday.

In some churches the Benedictus follows, and we welcome our Lord in the words used by the crowds who stood by the roadside on the first Palm Sunday as Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey. It always seems that a church becomes unusually quiet at this moment. The whole congregation realises that the most sacred moments of the service are approaching. We have come 'not because we must but because we may; not to show that we are righteous but that we love our Lord and wish to be his disciples; not because we are strong but because we are weak; not because we have a right to God's mercy but because we need it'. We are taking part in a sacrament —its outward sign will be the bread and the wine soon to be consecrated, and in the *Prayer of Humble Access* the priest asks for the inward and spiritual grace, 'that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his Body, and our souls washed through his most precious Blood, and that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us'.

Facing the altar,[1] the priest begins the *Prayer of Consecration*. First he speaks of our Lord's sacrifice on the Cross —a sacrifice sufficient to blot out the sins of the whole world—and of our Lord's command that we should observe the Holy Communion as a memorial of his death. Taking the paten, or plate, on which the bread has been placed, he recites St Paul's account of the story of the Last Supper, breaking the bread as our Lord himself broke it on the night on which he was betrayed. Then he takes the chalice, or cup, containing the wine and, laying his hand upon it, he blesses it.

The bread and the wine are consecrated. First the priest makes his communion, followed by the servers and choir,

[1] In some churches the priest says the Prayer of Consecration whilst standing at the north (or left-hand) end of the altar; in others the altar has been moved away from the wall, and the priest faces the congregation.

if present. Meanwhile the congregation may sing the *Agnus Dei*:

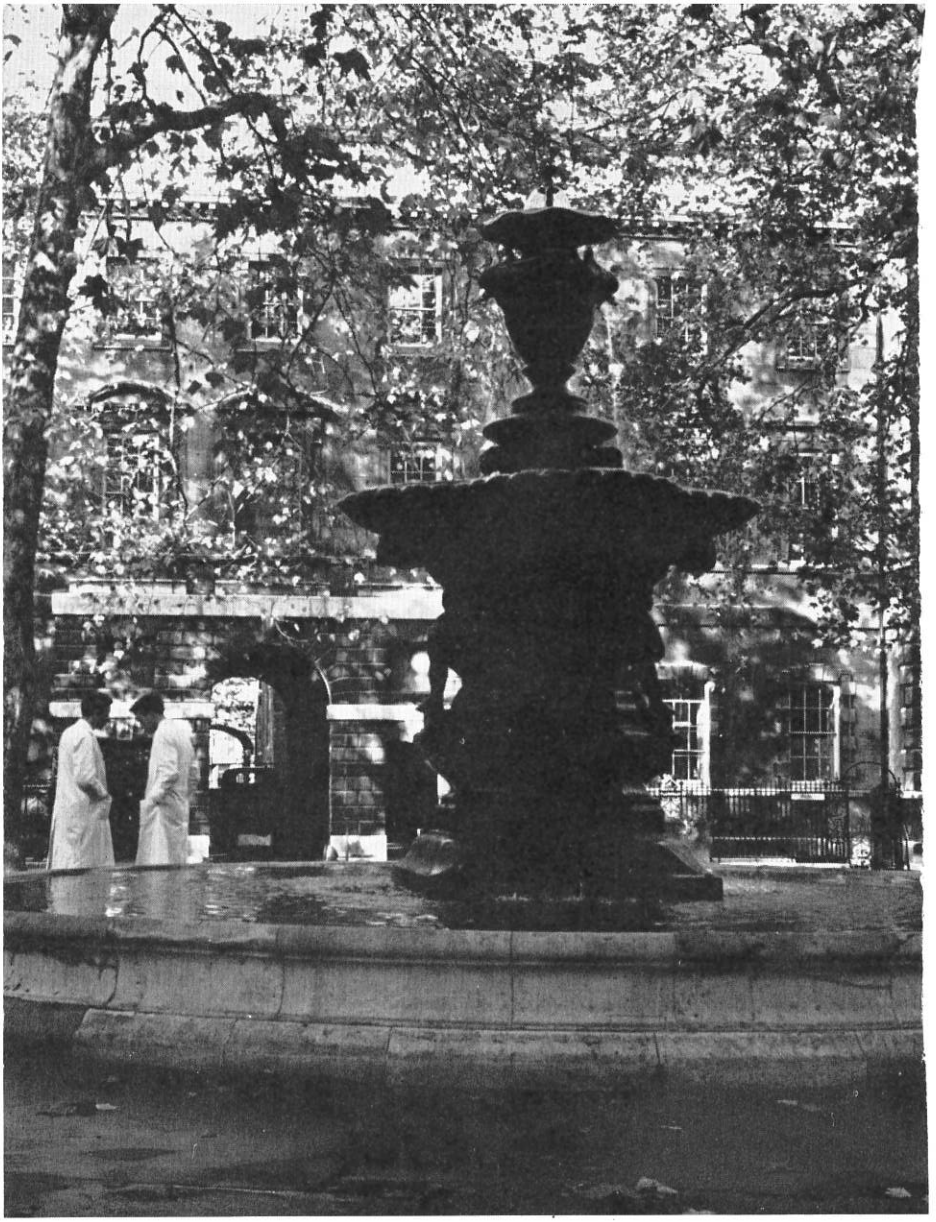
> O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world: have mercy upon us.
> O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world: have mercy upon us.
> O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world: Grant us thy peace.

It is now the turn of the congregation to make their communion. They file up to the communion rail and, kneeling there, wait for the priest to administer the sacrament. The bread is usually received in the crossed hands, in the words of St Cyril: 'making thy left hand a throne for thy right which is about to receive a King, hollow thy palm, and so receive the body of Christ'. In some churches the wafer is placed directly on the tongue of the communicant. There are also variations in the administration of the cup—in some churches it is given into the hands of the communicants, whilst in others the minister holds it to the communicants' lips. The word 'minister' has been used deliberately in the last sentence to describe the person who *administers* the chalice: he may be a deacon or a reader.

The full words of the form of administration are printed on the next page, but they are seldom used in full for each communicant. Sometimes the two sentences of each part are said to alternate communicants, often only the first sentence is used.

Before he leaves the altar the priest consumes the remaining elements, for, once they have been consecrated, the bread and the wine must not be left where they may be wrongly used. He also washes the sacred vessels, the paten and the chalice, to ensure that no trace of the con-

9. 'With this ring I thee wed . . .'



10. 'The Square' at Barts, the parish and Hospital of St Bartholomew in the City of London

Then shall the Minister first receive the Communion in both kinds himself, and then proceed to deliver the same to the Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, in like manner (if any be present), and after that to the people also in order, into their hands, all meekly kneeling. And when he delivereth the Bread to any one, he shall say,

The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy heart by faith with thanksgiving.

And the Minister that delivereth the Cup to any one shall say,

The Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Drink this in remembrance that Christ's Blood was shed for thee, and be thankful.

Fig. 30 The Administration of the Holy Communion.

secrated elements remains. In some churches it is customary to consecrate rather more bread and wine than are needed, and this is 'reserved' in a *pyx* for use in emergency, as, for example, when someone is dying and there is no time to consecrate afresh. This is the only condition upon which the consecrated elements may remain unconsumed after the service.

The Post-Communion

The whole congregation then joins in the *Lord's Prayer*, which is followed either by the *Prayer of Oblation* or the *Prayer of Thanksgiving*. At one time the Lord's Prayer and the Prayer of Oblation formed part of the Prayer of Consecration, and the Prayer of Thanksgiving remained alone for use after the Communion. In some churches this

practice has been resumed. Many people regard this as a change for the better, for both oblation and thanksgiving are essential parts of the service. As the 1662 Prayer Book makes them alternatives, one is usually omitted. If the Prayer of Oblation is said at the end of the Prayer of Consecration, however, the Prayer of Thanksgiving is used after the Communion. In the Prayer of Oblation we offer ourselves to God, sacrificing our own hopes and wishes to his will in order that we may be filled with his 'grace and heavenly benediction'. The Prayer of Thanksgiving is exactly what its name suggests—it expresses our gratitude to God for allowing us to receive this sacrament.

The *Gloria* was once the opening hymn of the Holy Communion. It is an ancient Greek hymn of praise which has been translated into English. Starting with the hymn sung by the angels at the birth of Christ, it asks for God's mercy for us, and ends in praise of the glory of God.

Our Lord's own service is at an end, and we are ready to return to the outside world. What difference has it made to us? What shall we take away with us when we leave the church? For a short space we have been in God's house, taking part in our Lord's Supper. Two gifts are ours as we take up life's journey again: peace and God's blessing. As the priest turns to give us the *Blessing*, the last words of the service remind us of this:

> The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord:
>
> And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you and remain with you always. Amen.

6

Whom God hath Joined Together

The Solemnisation of Matrimony

'OH, doesn't she look lovely!'

I expect you have heard these words. A crowd of excited relatives stands around the churchyard, cars with white ribbons wait at the gate, and a small group of passers-by has assembled in the hope of a glimpse. The photographer checks the brightness of the sun and sets his camera. . . .

A burst of music from inside the church warns those in the street that something is going to happen and, a few moments later, the bride and bridegroom appear smiling in the doorway, and pause for the photographs.

Most people like to be married in church. Yet the actual marriage itself is less of a church ceremony than any other in the Prayer Book, and it is possible to be married just as legally in a registry office. Some people think that there is nothing like a church wedding for setting off the bride to the best advantage, though this is one of the worst reasons for deciding on such a form. Happily, most young people choose a church because they want their marriage to be blessed by God.

So far as the law of the land is concerned, marriage is a contract or agreement between a man and a woman, made

in the presence of a person authorised by the Registrar-General and at least two other witnesses. It consists of the making of certain promises, after which the newly married couple and the witnesses sign a register as proof that they have completed the necessary formalities, and that the pair have agreed to be man and wife.

Although the marriage itself is set within the framework of a service when it takes place in church, the form of the service is called the *Solemnisation* of Matrimony because it is accompanied by prayers and the priest's blessing of the married pair. It is this which makes the marriage more solemn and holy than is possible in a short office ceremony which is confined to the making of the vows and the reading of a short explanation of the meaning of marriage by the registrar.

All priests of the Church of England are authorised persons, and each parish church has its own official government registers in which a record must be kept of all persons married there. Some Free Church ministers and Roman Catholic priests are also allowed to keep their own registers. In cases where they are not, a registrar must attend to supervise the signing of the register. Only certain churches are licensed to conduct marriages, which may normally take place only in such a building, during certain hours, and with the doors unlocked.

If you look at the end of your Prayer Book, you will see a *Table of Kindred and Affinity*. This is a list of near relatives who are not permitted to marry each other. Slight changes were made to this list in 1946.

No one under the age of sixteen may be married at all; no one under the age of twenty-one may be married without the consent of his or her parents, with very limited exceptions. The parents' consent must be given in writing,

and, if the couple think that their parents have refused consent unreasonably, they may apply to a magistrates' court for permission to marry.

Notice must be given before a marriage can take place. Those who wish to be married in church may arrange for this to be done in one of the following ways:

1. *By Banns*—This is the most usual form. The couple give notice of their intention to be married to the parish priest, who 'publishes the banns' by announcing the fact in the parish church on three consecutive Sundays or holy days. This must be done at Morning Prayer or the Holy Communion service, but, if there is no morning service, the banns may be published at Evening Prayer. The banns must be called in the usual place of residence of both the man and the woman. Until recently a marriage could take place only in the parish where one of the parties lived, but it may now be solemnised in the church which is the usual place of worship of one of them. In such a case the banns must also be called in that church. When the banns are called, anyone who has any objection to the marriage may state it, and all arrangements must then be halted until the objection has been proved to be wrong. Naturally, the objection must be a real one: a man cannot object, for example, because he had hoped to marry the bride himself, but was unable to win her love. The kind of objection which is valid is that one of the pair is already married, or that one is under twenty-one and has not obtained the necessary consent. If the marriage does not take place within three months of the last publication of the banns, they must be called again. If the couple live in different parishes, the banns must be called in each.

2. *By Licence*—A marriage licence, often wrongly called a 'special licence', is a form of permission issued by a

bishop for a marriage to take place. The couple must give notice of their intention to marry to a priest called a surrogate, specially appointed by the bishop to issue licences on his behalf. There are usually quite a number of surrogates in each diocese. Banns are not necessary in the case of a marriage by licence.

3. *By Special Licence*—Special licences are granted only by the Archbishop of Canterbury and, because they are very expensive, they are very rarely sought. In any case, a special licence requires special grounds, and will not be granted unless there are urgent reasons. An unusual feature of special licences is that they grant permission for the marriage to take place anywhere and at any time.

The service itself is quite brief. The couple stand near the chancel steps, the bride having arrived on her father's arm just before the service begins. Some brides think that it is fashionable to be a few minutes late for their wedding, so that they should not appear to be too anxious to be married! Unfortunately, the only impression they give is one of bad manners, since it seems that they cannot be bothered to be punctual for one of the most important occasions of their lives. Once the wedding party is assembled the priest reads a short explanation of the Church's teaching about marriage, and reminds the congregation that the objects of marriage are:

> (1) to ensure that children will be brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord, that is, in Christian homes where they will be taught to understand the Christian faith;
>
> (2) to allow two people who love each other to live together as husband and wife;
>
> (3) to allow a husband and wife to be together in prosperity or adversity, so that they may be able to help each other at all times.

№ 000

Arthur Michael, by Divine Providence ARCHBISHOP of CANTERBURY, Primate of all ENGLAND and Metropolitan, by the Authority of Parliament lawfully empowered for the purposes herein written: To Our well-beloved in Christ.

A - B - of the Parish of X, Bachelor
and
C - D - of the Parish of Y, Spinster

GRACE AND HEALTH. — **Whereas** you are as it is alleged, resolved to proceed to the Holy Estate of Matrimony

and you greatly desire that the same may be solemnized in the face of the Church; We therefore being willing that such your reasonable desires may more speedily obtain a due effect, and to the end therefore, that this Marriage may be publicly and lawfully solemnized in the Parish Church of

by the Officiating Clergyman thereof, without the publication or proclamation of the Banns of Matrimony, provided there shall appear no impediment of Kindred or Alliance, or any other lawful Cause, nor any Suit commenced in any Court, to bar or hinder the solemnization of the Marriage in accordance with this Licence; And likewise that the celebration of this Marriage be had and done publicly in the aforesaid Church between the hours of eight in the forenoon and six in the afternoon, Do, for lawful causes graciously grant this our **Licence and Faculty** as well to you the parties contracting, as to the OFFICIATING CLERGYMAN of the said Parish who is designed to solemnize the Marriage between you, in manner and form above specified, according to the Rites and Ceremonies prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer, set forth for that purpose by Authority of Parliament. **Given** under the Seal of Our **Office of Faculties** at Westminster, this 10th day of November in the year of our Lord One Thousand Nine Hundred and Sixty five and in the fifth year of Our Translation.

FACULTY OFFICE,
1, The Sanctuary,
Westminster, S.W.1.

Registrar

By the Stat. 12 and 13 Geo. VI. c. 76 this Licence is to continue in force only for three months from the date hereof.

SEAL

Fig. 31 A Marriage Licence.

Then, for the last time, the priest demands that anyone who knows a real reason why the marriage should not be solemnised should declare his reasons at once. At this final stage the ceremony would have to be postponed if a real objection were made.

The marriage vows follow. The bridegroom promises to love, comfort, honour, and keep his wife, in sickness and in health and, when he has done so, the bride makes the same promise to care for her husband.

The next question is a strange one. The priest asks 'Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?' Once married, the bride becomes a member of her husband's family, she takes his family name, and her children take their father's surname. A bride is usually 'given away' by her father, and always by a man. Oddly enough, this question requires no answer in words, although there is a story of a father who, not listening very carefully to the service, suddenly woke up when he realised his part had come, and said, 'I came on purpose!' The bride's father takes her hand and passes it to the priest, who then puts it into the hand of her bridegroom. Repeating the words after the priest, the bridegroom promises loyalty to his wife 'for better, for worse; for richer, for poorer; in sickness and in health; to love and to cherish, till death us do part'.

They loose their hands, and the bride then takes the bridegroom's right hand in hers as she pledges her loyalty to him. In the 1662 Prayer Book the bride is also required to promise to obey her husband, but this is sometimes omitted today. It was merely a sign that she accepted her husband as the head of the new family which they were beginning.

Once more the hands are loosed whilst the best man

produces the ring, which is laid on the priest's prayer book so that he may bless it. The ring is used in marriage because it is the symbol of eternity: as the ring has neither beginning nor end, so it is impressed on the couple that their love should have no end. The priest hands the ring to the bridegroom, who puts it on the third finger of his bride's left hand. This is traditionally the ring finger because it was once believed (incorrectly) that an artery ran from it to the heart. Holding the ring in place, the bridegroom says:

> With this ring I thee wed, with my body I thee worship, and with all my worldly goods I thee endow: In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

As the bride and bridegroom kneel before the priest a prayer is said for the marriage on which they are embarking, after which the priest joins the right hands of the couple together, binding them with the end of his stole, and says: 'Those whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder.' Turning to the people, he declares that the marriage has been properly made, the ring given, and the hands joined. Pronouncing the bride and bridegroom to be man and wife, he blesses them.

Whilst the congregation sings a psalm the priest leads the newly married couple to the altar, where he gives a short address. This is usually said quite quietly, and consists of a few words of advice about the importance of the promises which have just been made. The whole congregation joins in the Lord's Prayer, and further prayers are said for the couple who are starting a new adventure together.

The Prayer Book directs that 'it is convenient that

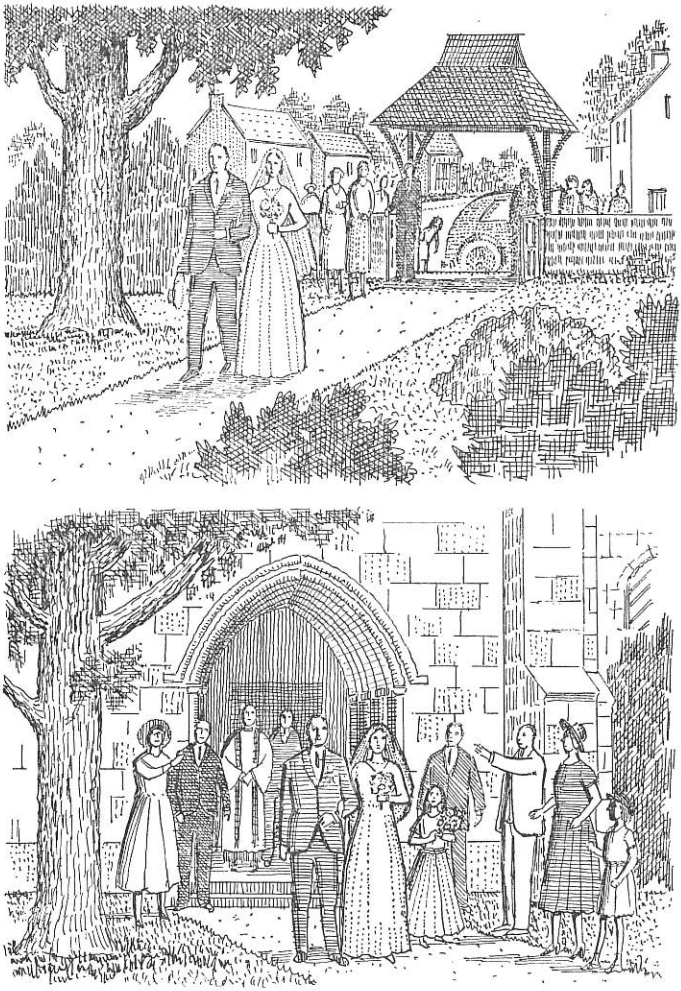


Fig. 32 Here comes the bride! The bride arrives at the church on her father's arm, and leaves with her husband. By tradition she always stands to the left of the man so that his sword arm is free to defend her.

newly-married persons should receive the Holy Communion at the time of their marriage, or at the first opportunity after their marriage'. This practice dropped out of use for many years, but it is becoming quite usual again. In such cases the celebration of the Holy Communion follows immediately after the marriage service, but before the blessing. The 1928 Prayer Book provides a Proper for this occasion.

So a new marriage begins, full of hope. Many people nowadays do not understand the attitude of the Church to marriages which break down at some stage, and are particularly critical of the Church because it will not allow divorced persons to marry someone else in church so long as their former spouse is alive. The explanation is quite simple. The marriage vow is 'until death us do part'. This is quite different from any other promise or agreement, because it creates a new relationship between the two persons concerned—a relationship which continues so long as they both live, even though one, or both, of them may break the vow.

But the Church does not completely cast out the divorced, even those who remarry. In many dioceses the custom is that, although those who wish to remarry during the lifetime of a spouse must do so in a registry office, a priest may then ask for God's blessing on the marriage at a short service in church. Before he does so the priest must satisfy himself that the couple really intend to make the new marriage last. This is a welcome sign that the Church does care for all its members, and does not desert them provided they are sincere.

7

If the Sick Person be not able to come . . .

The Visitation of the Sick

THIS chapter is being written on a sunny summer morning in one of the wards of the Royal Hospital of St Bartholomew in the City of London. The hospital, one of the oldest in Britain, still stands on the site where it was founded by the monk, Rahere, in A.D. 1123.

London has changed a great deal since the priory and hospital were first built more than eight hundred years ago. From my bed I can see the golden figure of Justice on the dome of the Central Criminal Court, better known as the Old Bailey, and the tower of St Sepulchre's Church whose bell used to toll to announce executions outside Newgate Prison, where the Old Bailey now stands. At night we can hear the hum of sorting machines in the General Post Office, a few yards away, and the booming of Great Tom, the bell of St Paul's Cathedral, marks the passing hours. Just across the square is the great Smithfield meat market which belongs to the Corporation of London.

Because it is not only a hospital but also a parish, St Bartholomew's is quite different from all other hospitals.

At the time of the Reformation it received a royal charter from King Henry VIII, by which the ancient chapel of St Bartholomew the Less became the parish church of the hospital.

Within these walls where Harvey discovered the circulation of the blood there are, today, about seven hundred patients—some seriously ill, others here for a short time. In addition, a quarter of a million outpatients visit the hospital each year. Some of the inpatients are so ill that they will end their lives here, but, thanks to the devoted skill of one of the finest teams of surgeons, doctors and nurses in the world, the great majority will soon be taking up their normal lives again.

The Church has always recognised that it has a special duty towards the sick and the poor, and Rahere was a churchman whom the Holy Spirit moved to see that this duty was not forgotten. It was this inspiration which led him to establish his hospital here.

Before we look at the Prayer Book service for the visitation of the sick, let us see what arrangements are made here for those who are not well enough to go to church. Bart's, as the hospital is popularly called, is fortunate in having the full-time services of Church of England chaplains, partly because of the great number of patients, but chiefly because—being a separate parish—the vicar and assistant curates of the church are also the chaplains of the hospital. The incumbent's official designation is, in fact, 'Vicar and Hospitaller'.

Yesterday morning one of the clergy came round to take the names of all patients who wished to receive the Holy Communion in the wards. Soon after seven o'clock this morning one of the little trolleys which are used for carrying instruments and dressings was covered with a

white cloth, and furnished with a cross, candlesticks and two tiny vases of flowers. This was to serve as an altar. The trolley was then wheeled to the side of my bed, and I was joined by the other patients who wished to take part, and who are able to move about more freely than I am at present. A few minutes later the assistant hospitaller came through the screen which had been drawn round the bed, bringing with him bread and wine which had previously been consecrated in the church.[1] As the clergy have a large number of wards to visit, the service has to be shortened considerably. After a shortened Invitation, we joined in the General Confession, and this was followed by the Absolution and the Prayer of Humble Access. The priest then administered the Holy Communion, and we all said the Lord's Prayer before the Blessing.

On this occasion the priest dipped the wafer of bread into the wine, and placed it directly on the tongue of each communicant. This method of administration is called *intinction*, and is practised in hospitals to avoid the risk of spilling from the chalice, as well as to avoid the possible spread of infection which might occur if the chalice were used by each patient.

St Bartholomew's Hospital is so large that the Holy Communion cannot be celebrated, even in this shortened form, in every ward each Sunday. Arrangements are made, however, for a celebration in each ward at some time during the week. On Wednesdays the Holy Communion is taken to sick nurses in their special rooms in the Nurses' Home. There is a celebration in the parish church every morning, and patients who are well enough are allowed to take part in this service.

[1] Consecrated bread and wine are always reserved in St Bartholomew's for the communion of the sick.

This morning, those of us who were well enough to be moved were allowed to attend Matins in St Bartholomew's Church. Some patients were able to walk; those who could not reach the church on their own were taken in wheel-chairs. Nurses pushed us along the corridors to the lift. Across the courtyard, where the trees made a fretwork of sunlight on the ground, patients from different wards made their way to church. Most of the church has been rebuilt, but parts of it are five hundred years old. At the end of the service, which lasted about three-quarters of an hour, our nurses were waiting to wheel us back to the wards.

In addition, Evensong is broadcast from the hospital studio every Sunday, and patients who wish to do so may listen through the headphones which hang at the head of every bed. On Fridays the clergy arrange a Records Request session, and play music chosen by the patients for just over an hour.

Apart from regular services the clergy are always available to patients who need their help. They make regular rounds of the wards, and take particular care to visit patients who are a long way from home or who, for other reasons, have no relatives or friends to visit them. Many patients like to receive the Holy Communion on the morning of their operations, and the sacrament is always brought on request to those who are dying.

This is all part of the Church's ministry to the sick, but it is only part. There are always many people lying ill in their own homes, and to them, also, the clergy are ready to bring the comfort and help of the Church. This includes the opportunity for the sick to make their confession if they wish to do so, and also anointing with oil which has been specially blessed.

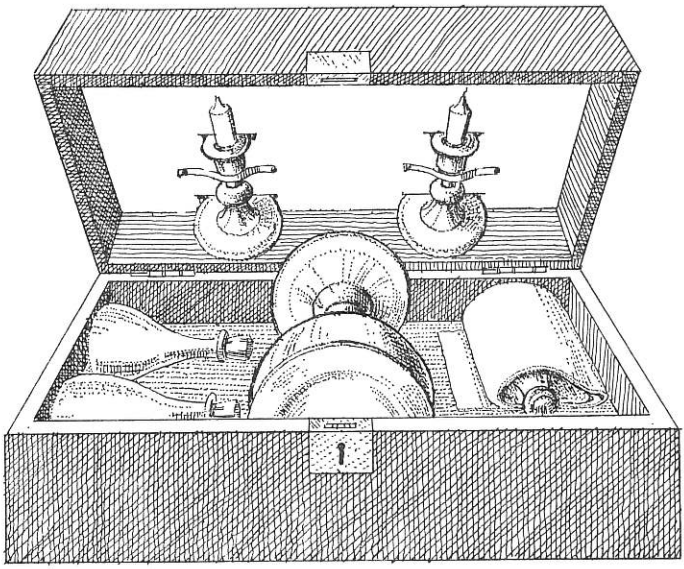
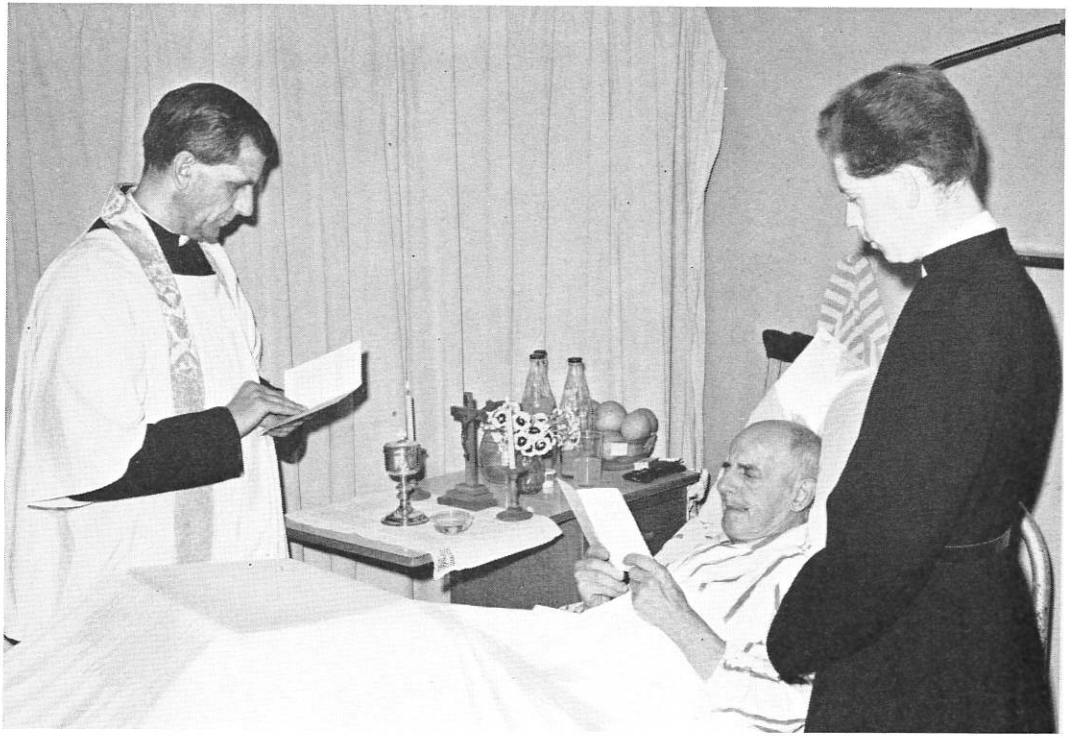


Fig. 33 A 'travelling' Communion set for the Communion of the Sick in private houses.

If you turn to the service for the visitation of the sick in the Prayer Book, you will find that it is very short. This is necessary because it often has to be used for those who are very ill and who have not the strength to follow a long service. On entering the house the priest, in obedience to our Lord's command,[1] says, 'Peace be to this house; and to all that dwell in it.' He then makes his way to the invalid's room and says the Kyrie[2] and the Lord's Prayer. These are followed by a short litany, and two prayers asking for God's help for the sick person.

The prayers for the recovery of the sick person are

[1] St Luke 10.5.
[2] See page 60.



11. Holy Communion in one of the wards of St George's Hospital, Hyde Park Corner

12. The State Funeral of Sir Winston Churchill

always made conditional upon God's will. We must remember that it is not always possible for the answer to our prayers to be 'Yes'. Children sometimes ask their parents for all kinds of things, some of which would not be good for them, however much they wish for them. A wise father must sometimes say 'No', even though it will disappoint the child. Children, for their part, must learn that their parents have a wiser idea of what is good for them than they have themselves, and that a refusal may be the sign of a greater, not a lesser, love. As children of God, we must also learn this lesson, and understand that God, who knows all, can see much more clearly than we what is the best answer to our prayers. It is not God's will that we should suffer sickness and pain; when these come, however, he is able to give us the necessary strength to come through every difficulty we may meet.

Our Lord taught us this himself when he gave us his own prayer: 'Thy will be done.' Later, when he was facing arrest and death in the Garden of Gethsemane, he asked God to spare him if it were possible, but added: 'Nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt.'[1]

It is right for us to pray for the recovery of those whom we love, but it is wrong to expect that—just because we have prayed—our prayer will necessarily be answered in the way we want. Someone once said: 'I don't believe in God any more. When my mother was dying I prayed ever so hard that she might get better, but she died just the same.' That is quite a wrong idea. We must remember that God has a plan, not only for the whole world, but for each of us, and we must allow him to do what he knows to be best. This doesn't mean that God ignores our prayers because they may conflict with his plan; it does mean that

[1] St Mark 14.32–42.

we must leave God to decide whether our prayers can be answered by saying 'Yes', knowing that he will grant our wishes if they are in accordance with his will.

So, if our prayers seem not to be answered as we would wish, we must not say, 'God hasn't answered'; He has—but the answer is 'No', or 'Not yet'.

After the prayers the priest repeats the Apostles' Creed, and asks the invalid whether he does believe everything which it declares he must. The priest then invites the sick person to confess his sins if he has anything troubling his conscience, or if he normally goes to Confession. He may then give him absolution, saying:

> Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left power to his Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in him, of his great mercy forgive thee thine offences: And by his authority committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy sins, In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

The comma after the words '. . . all thy sins' should be noted. A full stop would suggest that the priest is giving absolution personally; the comma makes it quite plain that he is giving absolution through God's power, not his own.

All members of the Church normally receive the Holy Communion publicly in church. In the case of serious illness this is not possible and, 'if the sick person be not able to come to the church', the priest may take the bread and the wine to the invalid's home. Here he may celebrate the Holy Communion in some convenient place, using the special Collect, Epistle, and Gospel appointed for the purpose.

The sacrament of *Unction* is practised in the Eastern and Roman Churches. In the Roman Catholic Church the

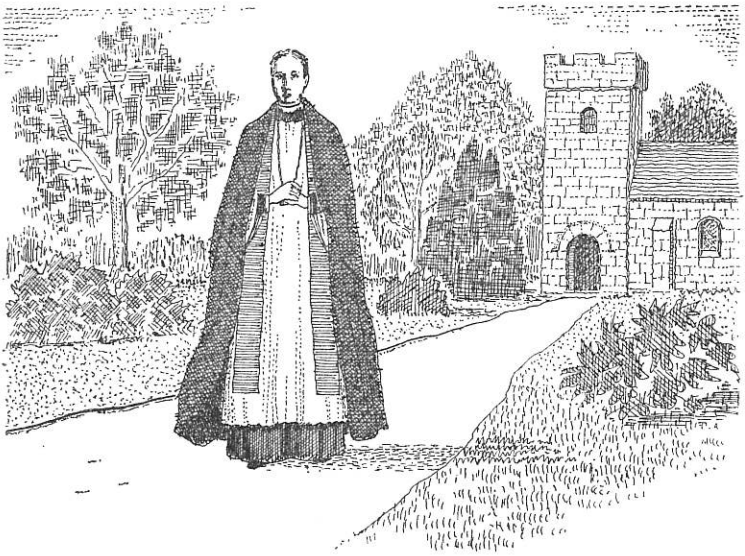


Fig. 34 In some churches a portion of the consecrated bread and wine are 'reserved' for those who are sick. In this picture a priest is carrying the host to an invalids home in a pyx.

sick may be anointed with oil, accompanied by prayer, once during each illness where there is danger of death, 'for the health of soul and body'. The eyes, ears, nose, lips, hands, and feet are anointed. In the Greek Church the ceremony is called the *Oil of Prayer*, and is administered in church by seven, five, or three priests. A form of Unction was included in the English Prayer Book of 1549 'if the sick person desire', and included a prayer for the healing of body and mind, forgiveness, and spiritual strength. It was dropped from the 1552 and 1662 Prayer Books, but there has been a move towards its restoration in recent years. The Scottish and American Prayer Books

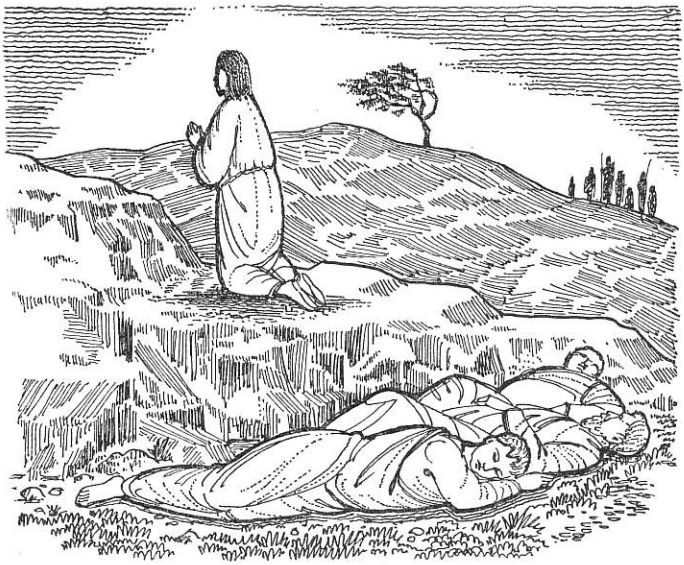


Fig. 35 'Thy will be done'.

of 1929 include such a service, and a *Form of Unction and the Laying on of Hands* was approved by the Convocations of Canterbury and York in 1935 for use in England with the consent of the diocesan bishop.

The anointing of the sick with oils is mentioned twice in the New Testament,[1] and it was a common practice in the early Church. At one time it was believed that anointing led to recovery, and this view has lingered on in the Greek Church.

Since 1935 there has been a growth of the practice of anointing the sick in some parishes of the Church of England. Some bishops bless oils on Maundy Thursday

[1] St Mark 6.13; James 5.14–16.

each year, and these are kept for use in cases where they are desired. Anointing is practised at St Bartholomew's Hospital as permission to use the 1935 service has been given in the Diocese of London.

So, day by day, the Church brings its ministry to the sick in body or mind. The great mental hospitals have their own chaplains, specially trained to work with those whose minds have broken down. Other people, sick in their own homes, are visited by their parish priests with unceasing devotion. For many who are lonely these visits mean much, for they also give the sick person the opportunity for a friendly chat. The alms offered at the altar of the parish church during celebrations of the Holy Communion are reserved to help the sick and the needy who

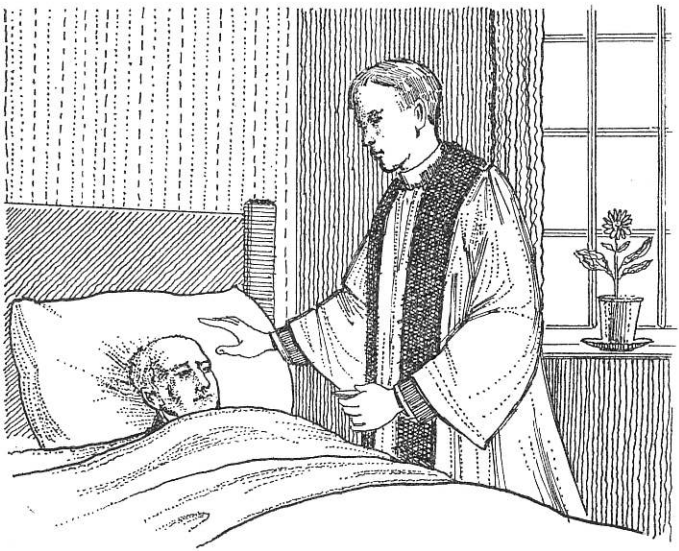


Fig. 36 Anointing the sick.

may not be able to afford the extra comforts which mean so much when you are ill.

Sometimes the clergy may be called in to offer advice, as when a person who is dangerously ill wishes to make a will. Sometimes their help is sought in tracing members of a family who have moved away and lost touch with the invalid. Often, in small hospitals, the clergy undertake their hospital duties in addition to their full-time work as parish priests. Above all, they must never forget that the sick feel cut off from the world, and that the help of the Church, the feeling that they are not forgotten by those outside, means a great deal to people who are confined to bed.

If you look carefully at the Prayer Book service for the sick, you will see that its keynote is preparation for life. It may be that the sick person will recover, and be able to lead a normal life again. If so, the help of the Church during his illness, the opportunity to think over and pray about his faith, above all, the knowledge that the Church has not forgotten him when he was unable to worship with his fellow Christians, will enable him to face life again healed in spirit as well as in body.

It may be God's will that the sick person dies. The priest, and those standing by the bedside, may know that the patient is receiving the Holy Communion for the last time and that, before long, he will have passed on to a new life. Even in the face of death, the preparation is for life, so that the dying person may be more fitted to begin his new life with Christ. Thus the Church uses the same preparation for those about to die as for those who will recover.

So far we have spoken about the visits of the clergy to sick people in hospitals or in their own homes. On such

occasions the priest prays for the individual in the name of the Church. In many churches it is customary also to invite the congregation to pray for those who are sick, especially at the Holy Communion. This is usually done by naming the sick parishioners before the Prayer for the Church, so that they may be remembered in the prayers of the people. It is comforting for those unable to be in church to know that the prayers of their friends are being offered to God so that, if it be his will, they may be restored to health.

8

I am the Resurrection and the Life

The Burial of the Dead

ALL journeys lead home. It may seem strange that one of the things I remember most clearly about our family holidays when I was a boy is the journey back to the small Essex market town where we lived. I looked forward to those holidays by the sea for months beforehand, and I enjoyed every minute of them, but the fortnight soon passed and we set off for home. The Saturday-afternoon trains were crowded, and we often had to stand in the corridor with the August sun beating through the windows, but at last the journey came to an end.

As we climbed the steep hill to our house a new excitement took the place of the holiday mood. What had my friends been doing on their holidays? Were there any more flowers out in the garden? How had the cat fared whilst we had been away? Back in my own room, I could watch the setting sun's pink reflection on the plaster of the houses across the street, and the butcher next door putting up his shutters for the week-end. Sounds mingled with sights: the bellringers were having their weekly practice, and the old lady opposite was mowing her lawn with the machine which so often stopped me from going to sleep as she pushed it forwards and pulled it back . . .

It was a peaceful little town—many of you might think it was sleepy and dull. Within a few minutes I had forgotten the sadness with which I had left the sea, knowing that I should not see it again for fifty weeks. I was home—and glad to be there.

Through this book we have been following the journey of life, looking at some of its most splendid moments, and remembering those days when we just carry on, trying to keep to the right route even though it may not be very exciting. Like all journeys, life comes to an end, and this last chapter is about the end of life's journey, and the beginning of a new life when we have reached home.

In many ways it is quite natural for us to be sad when one of our friends, or one of our relatives, dies. We have been used to seeing them often, have been able to talk to them, to ask their advice, to have their help and companionship. We know that, so long as we are continuing along life's journey, we shall not see them again. Worse still, it seems to us, they will not be able to share our fun or join in our adventures. It reminds us that one day we, too, shall have to walk through the valley of the shadow of death, and this is a thought that frightens many people.

Yes, it is quite natural—but it is also quite wrong. Much of this sadness is really self-pity, and we are really being sorry for ourselves because we feel lonely. It is right for us to feel sorry for other people in their sadness—for a young widow who will have to go without many pleasures because there is not so much money to spend, for children whose home will never be the same because Mother has died, for parents whose hope for the future dies with their child—but this sympathy should take practical forms. It is our Christian duty to see that something is done to share the burden, perhaps by small gifts,

perhaps just by friendship at a time of loneliness. There is a story about an old Quaker who was present at a meeting where people were talking about a great disaster. Speaker after speaker expressed sympathy with those who had suffered. At last the old man could stand it no longer. 'Brethren,' he said, 'I am deeply touched by all your sympathy; for my part I sympathise five pounds.'

One thing which many people find it hard to understand about death is the way in which young children, or those who seem to have so much more good to do, come to the end of what seems to be an incomplete life. In 1961 the people of the United States of America chose as their new President John F. Kennedy, a convinced Christian (he

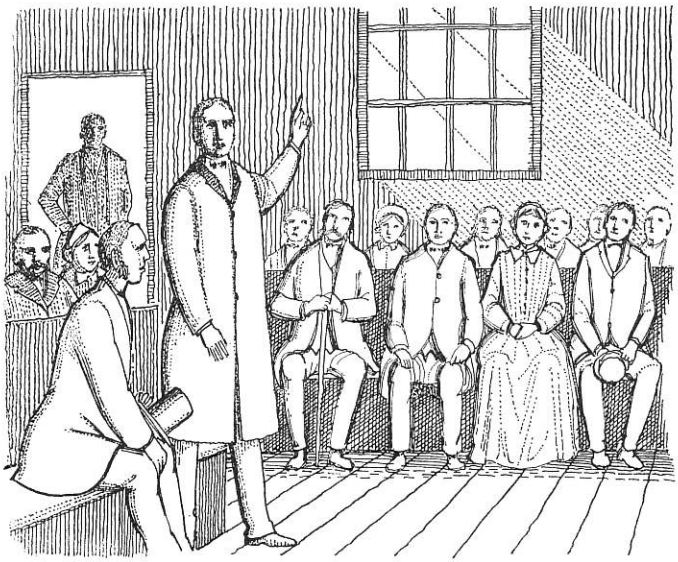


Fig. 37 'I sympathise five pounds.'

was a Roman Catholic) and an unusually young man for such high office. At home and abroad President Kennedy soon gained respect and affection: in particular he was admired for his fight against the colour-bar in America, and for his successful attempts to improve relations between his country and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The future seemed very bright for the young President when he was struck down at the age of forty-six by an assassin's bullets during a visit to Dallas in Texas. He had done much, but it seemed that he had so much more to give the world. Small wonder that people asked, 'Why?'

We must turn once again to the words of the Lord's Prayer at these times, and say quite simply, 'Thy will be done', remembering that the dead are safe in God's keeping. There is a story about a gardener who had spent many weeks tending a very special plant which he hoped to enter for his master in a flower show. He watered it carefully, protected it from the cold winds, and fed it so that it was the best of its kind. At exactly the right time it came into flower. One morning, as he walked round the garden, he paused in horror, for the flower had gone and only a stalk remained

'Who plucked this flower?' he asked in anguish.

'I did,' said the master.

The gardener said no more. It was not his job to argue with his master. The flower belonged to the owner of the garden, and he had chosen to pick it. However disappointed the gardener was, however much his master's action cut across his own plan, the final decision was not his. We may not be sure that it is God's will that a child should die; often it seems to be contrary to his plan, and is due to causes which could be avoided or to a disease

which cannot yet be cured. Nevertheless, if God is like Jesus—as we believe he is—we may be sure that what seems to us to be sheer tragedy will be used by God and turned into triumph.

The burial service in the Prayer Book is strictly a service for the burial of Christians. The Church has never taught that everyone will go to heaven, and it is quite wrong to use this service for the burial of those who have quite plainly had no time for the Church, merely to avoid hurting someone's feelings. The Prayer Book forbids its use for the burial of suicides or those who have been excommunicated. It may, however, be used for someone who has committed suicide whilst his mind is unbalanced.

Christian teaching has always stressed the resurrection of the body, but this does not mean the reassembly of the old framework which has been laid away, rather like old clothes, and for which we have no further use. We are known both to God and to our earthly friends as individuals, and Christians believe that this will still be so in the life of the resurrection. There will be something in the new life corresponding to the body, recognisable but spiritual. We shall not be spirits without bodies, but we shall have a spiritual body suitable to a spiritual world.

At a funeral we dispose reverently of the body which is no longer the effective instrument of the Holy Spirit, rather than say farewell to someone whom we have loved or respected. For this reason, the opening words of the service are a triumphant fanfare of faith:

> I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.

This is the keynote of the service. We know nothing

about what life in the next world is like, but our Lord has told us one or two things on which we can base our expectation. Remember that these are not just pleasant ideas which people have dreamed up to make death seem less terrible—they are promises which our Lord has made.

The first promise is *resurrection*. Jesus said: 'This is the will of my Father, that everyone that beholdeth the Son and believeth in him shall have eternal life: and I will raise him up at the last day.'[1] The greatest of all miracles was the resurrection of our Lord. No one could fully understand it at the time, and you must remember that this staggering event happened less than a million days ago. We believe that this one event so changed the course of the world that it is clear proof of the fulfilment of our Lord's promise. Before then, death had seemed to be the end, although there were some who believed that it could not be so. Our Lord's goodness was so great that death could have no power over him, and so was beaten.

The second promise is of *eternal life*. After resurrection we stay with God, our Creator and Father. About this, Jesus said: 'In my Father's house are many mansions: I go to prepare a place for you.'[2]

The third promise is of *judgment*. Jesus said that he would return at the last day to judge the quick (living) and the dead.[3] Christian thought has long divided the life of the next world into heaven and hell. At the judgment, those whose lives are worthy will be allowed to be with God in heaven, but those who are judged to be not worthy will be cut off from God in hell. At one time it was customary to think of heaven as a delightful place with

[1] St John 6.40.
[2] St John 14.2.
[3] St Matthew 24. See also 2 Timothy 4.1, and 1 Peter 4.5.

palaces and parks, whilst hell was thought to be an everlasting fire in which the souls condemned to torture would burn for ever. Let us say quite clearly that we just do not know what heaven or hell will be like. It does seem to be quite clear, however, that the main distinction is between those who are with God and those who are shut out from his presence.

If God is a loving Father, would he ever allow any of his children to suffer torments for ever, without hope of release? We must remember that those who cut themselves off from God do so of their own free will. In our earthly families we sometimes find one member who will not accept his parents' love or help. Good parents will go on offering their love however much their children spurn it, and they are always ready to forgive, and to take their children home again. If an earthly parent can forgive in this way, should we not expect that God will be even more merciful? It is not a question of any limit to God's mercy, for he will never turn away any of his children. Through shame, or pride, or bitterness, they may refuse to accept God's help. In the parish church at Earls Colne in Essex is a memorial erected by his parents to a young man who ran away to sea, in defiance of his parents' love, and who died in foreign parts. In their grief the parents inscribed under his name the words:

> If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.[1]

No one is beyond the mercy of God, but some refuse to the bitter end to accept it. They choose to be cut off from God—they choose hell—simply because they will not sincerely say that they are sorry, and so choose heaven.

[1] Psalm 139.9–10.

For an illustration of the wideness of God's love, read the parable of the prodigal son.[1]

Sometimes a body is brought into church on the evening before a funeral, and in such a case relatives may watch by it all night in prayer. If so, there will probably be a celebration of the Holy Communion early on the day of the funeral, at which the person who has died is particularly remembered. More often, the coffin is brought to the church or cemetery immediately before the funeral, and is met at the gate by the clergy, who recite verses from the Bible which lay particular stress on the hope of the resurrection whilst they lead the procession to the church.

When the coffin has been placed before the altar certain psalms are said. At the funeral of an adult these lay stress on our need for God's mercy. At a child's funeral it is now more usual to use the shepherd's hymn, Psalm 23. The psalms are followed by the lesson and here, again, the custom has changed greatly in recent years.

At one time it was usual to read a very long passage from St Paul's first letter to the Church in Corinth, in which he tried to explain how the resurrection may take place. Some of the Corinthians had tried to be difficult, and had said: 'How can there be a resurrection, for we know that the body is buried, and remains in the ground? What sort of a body can a spirit have?'

St Paul explained that a farmer cannot harvest his living crop unless he has planted what seems to be dead in the field. He does not sow complete stalks of corn which suddenly sprout through the soil: what he plants is bare grain, which cannot live again until it has been buried. So it is with the resurrection: the human body is buried, but a more glorious body is raised—

[1] St Luke 15.11–32.

It is sown in corruption: it is raised in incorruption;
It is sown in dishonour: it is raised in glory;
It is sown in weakness: it is raised in power;
It is sown a natural body: it is raised a spiritual body.[1]

It is now customary to read a shorter lesson from the book of Revelation in which St John describes the new Jerusalem (heaven) descending from God at the end of time.[2] Many people feel that it is a great pity that mourners are not always comforted with St Paul's assurance of the resurrection. It is sometimes said that the lesson from Corinthians is difficult to understand for people who are not regular churchgoers, but it does not seem any more strange than the vision of St John the Divine.

After the lesson the body is carried from the church, and taken to the graveside, where the priest reminds those present of the shortness of human life. After the coffin has been lowered into the grave, earth is cast upon it as a sign that the earthly body has returned to the elements from which it was made, whilst the spirit has returned to God who gave it.[3]

The Lord's Prayer is followed by two short prayers. The second of these reminds us that we ought not to be 'sorry, as men without hope, for them that sleep in Christ'. Death is the end of earthly life, but it is also the beginning of a new and more glorious life, and we should not be sad because another Christian has begun this new life.

During the past hundred years the custom of destroying the remains of the human body by fire has grown steadily. This is called *cremation*, and is carried out in a special building called a crematorium. A crematorium has one or more chapels where funeral services can be said and, at the words of committal—which are slightly altered—the

[1] Corinthians 15.20–58. [2] Revelation 21.1–7. [3] Ecclesiastes 12.7.

coffin moves gently from sight through a screen. The supporters of cremation claim that it is much more hygienic, and point to the huge areas at present covered by cemeteries, which could otherwise be used for playing fields or some other purpose for the good of the living. After cremation the ashes may be scattered in a garden, or placed in an urn.

The Church of England has accepted cremation as an alternative to burial, and it is left for relatives to act in accordance with the wishes of the deceased person or, if these are not known, as they think fit. A body may not be cremated, however, if the deceased has left instructions to the contrary.

There is a story of a Scottish minister who went to his church on All Saints' Day, one year, to conduct a service of Holy Communion. Only two or three members of his congregation had turned out on the cold November morning to join with him in this act of worship. All Saints' Day is the day when, above all others, we remember the whole company of Christian saints, of all ages and of all lands, who have gone before us, and have passed from the Church militant here on earth to join the Church triumphant in heaven.

As the minister received the bread and the wine with his tiny congregation, it seemed to him that his church was filled to overflowing with men and women who had fought the good fight, and had come back to join in this remote service. Not only from this country, but from China, and Africa, and India, they crowded through the doors—brown, and yellow, and white-skinned men, still carrying the banner of Christ across the world today. The Church militant and the Church triumphant had joined together in a great service of praise and thanksgiving.

When his congregation had dispersed the minister went back to the manse for breakfast.

'Were there many people in church this morning?' asked his wife.

For a moment the old man remained silent; then, remembering his host of unseen visitors, he smiled and answered dreamily:

'Millions, my dear—millions!'

Three centuries ago a Bedfordshire tinker named John Bunyan roamed the lanes, mending pots and pans. Because he spent most of his life travelling, he also had the idea of writing a book about the Christian life as a journey. Bunyan's book, *The Pilgrim's Progress from This World to That which is to Come*, describes the wanderings of a hero called Christian through many difficulties on his travels from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City. At one point Bunyan described the death of one of the most lovable characters in the book as the story of a man fording a river. On one bank his friends (the Church on earth) waved him farewell, but there was no sadness in the parting because on the far bank other friends (the Church in heaven) were waiting to welcome him.

Just after the end of the second world war, in 1945, many soldiers returned from years of service overseas, and parties were given and flags hung out to welcome them. At that time I was living in a mining town in South Yorkshire where one family, who lived opposite the church, painted on the front of their house the words

WELCOME HOME, JIM.

They painted it so effectively that nine years later it was still there, and, for all I know, it remains to this day. I cannot tell you what Jim had done during the war: he

may have been through hard fighting, or he may have had one of the humdrum jobs without any glamour which were the lot of many soldiers. What he did does not matter; what is important is what he was. To his family he was a son, and a hero, and they gave him a welcome the signs of which remained for many years. It was the same kind of welcome that Mr Valiant-for-truth in *The Pilgrim's Progress* received as he crossed the river, the kind of welcome which awaits all who have journeyed through life in the faith of Christ and the sure and certain hope of the resurrection, and have come home safely at last:

> Then said he, 'I am going to my Father's; and though with great difficulty I have got hither, yet now I do not repent me of all the trouble I have been at to arrive where I am. My sword I give to him that shall succeed me in my pilgrimage, and my courage and skill to him that can get it. My marks and scars I carry with me to be a witness for me that I have fought His battles who will now be my rewarder.'
>
> When the day that he must go hence was come, many accompanied him to the riverside, into which as he went down he said, 'Death, where is thy sting?' And as he went down deeper, he said, 'Grave, where is thy victory?'
>
> So he passed over, and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side.

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